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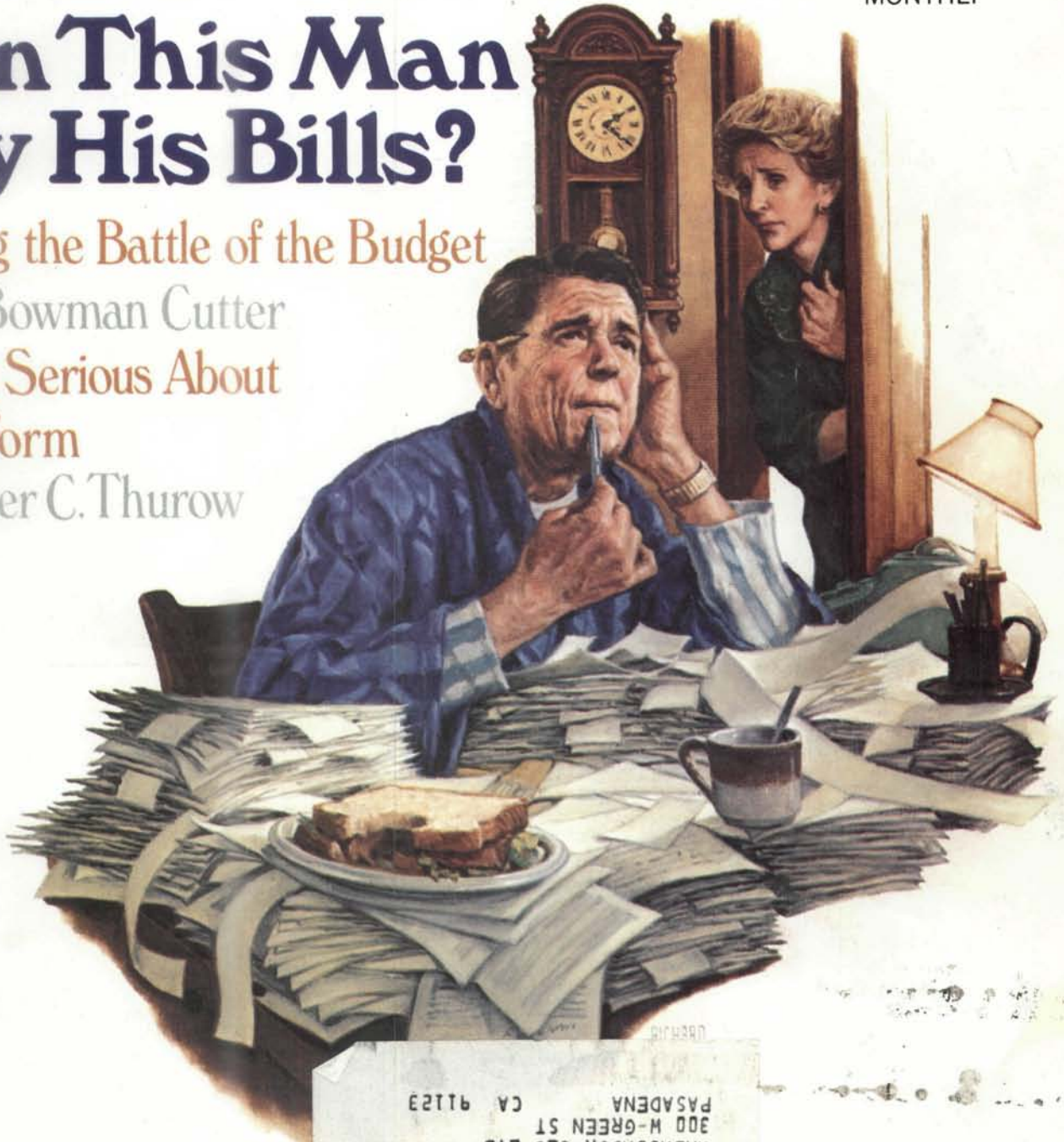
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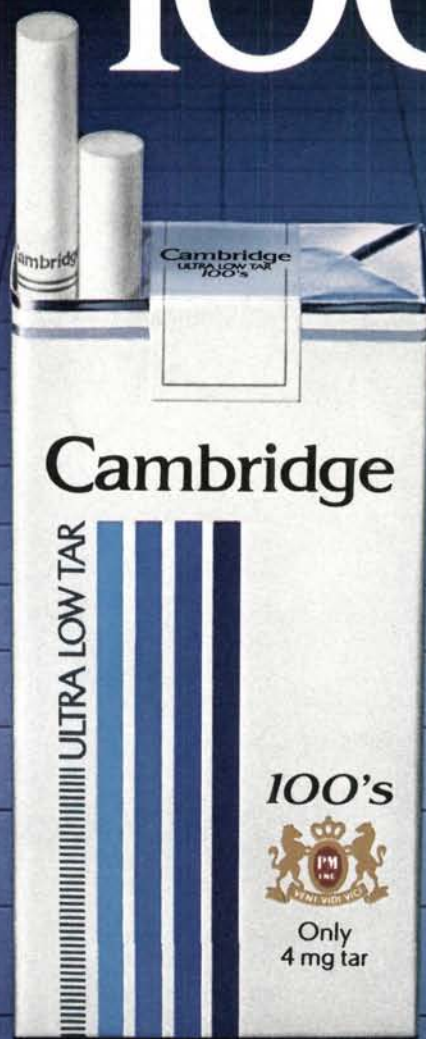
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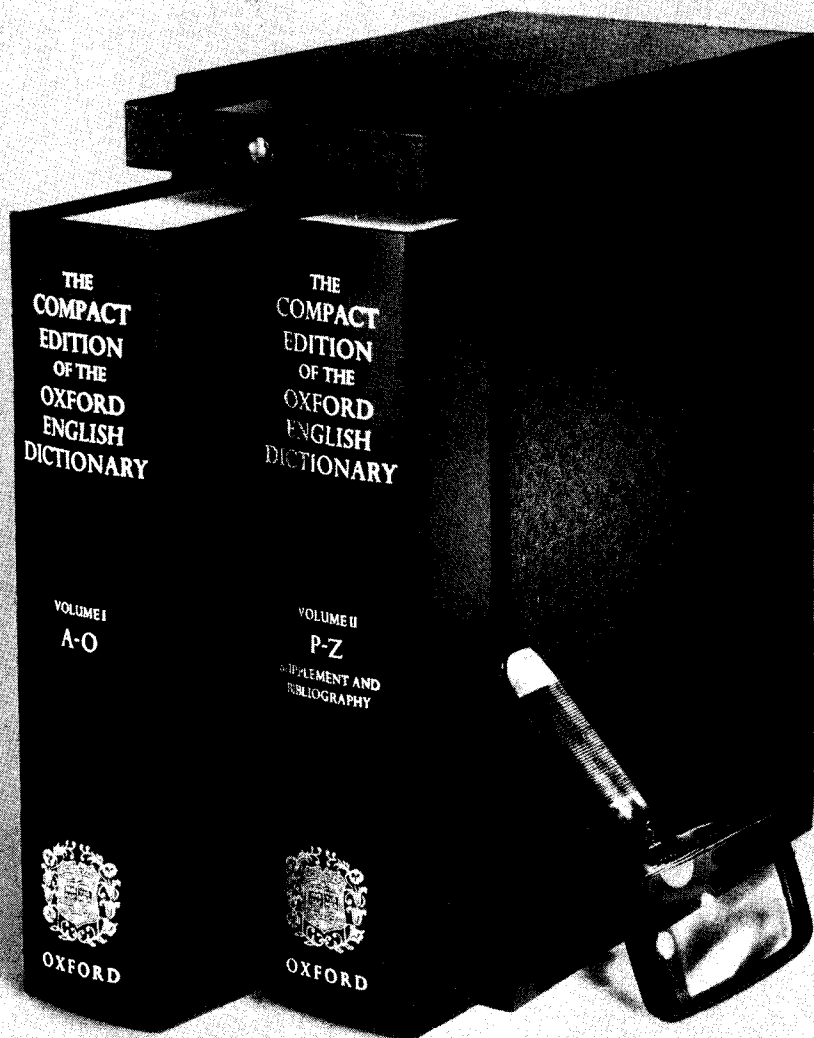
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Furor Over a Non-Vitamin

A-21, it's called. When he first heard about it, Yale's president A. Bartlett Giamatti thought it was a vitamin. It has aroused high ire among scientists and educators, in a ruckus pitting academe against government bureaucracy. The controversy illuminates how Washington's tentacles are spreading on campus, threatening academic freedom and scientific inquiry.

Circular A-21 is a set of regulations issued years ago by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. It sets forth cost accounting principles for colleges and universities performing research under government grants.

What touched off the current commotion is an amendment to A-21 that took effect last fall over widespread protests. The revision calls for an onerous kind of documentation by faculty members receiving federal research grants. They're now required to account for 100% of their doings. They're supposed to keep track of and report precisely how much time they spend on research, teaching, administration, counseling, and other activities, both on campus and off.

The new tangle of red tape has drawn attack, individually and collectively, from academicians and scientists across the country. They see it as wasteful, meaningless, costly, demeaning, and detrimental to scientific progress. At one large West Coast university, the regulation will generate 3,000 to 8,000 more reports yearly and will mean spending up to \$300,000 to put in the new reporting system, according to the journal *Science*.

Among the critics are the National Academy of Sciences, the Association of American Universities, the Council of Scientific Society Presidents, and numerous faculty senates. The academy takes the view that the regulation will churn up a mountain of "cumbersome and mean-

ingless" paperwork, stifle flexibility in research, and frustrate and demoralize faculty members. Educational institutions, already hard pressed financially, will now be forced to spend large sums in ways that contribute nothing to education and science.

Individual professors protest that it's none of the government's business how they spend their time. They seethe at having to tell the government how much effort they devote to activities unrelated to government-sponsored research. The University of Hawaii's faculty senate has decried "any attempt to assess intellectual effort by hours expended, rather than objectives achieved. . ."

A similar reporting requirement was proposed in the late 1960s. It was quickly dropped on recommendation of a government task force that called it "meaningless and a waste of time" both for the government and universities. Now it's back again.

"Never have I seen the lash of federal regulation applied to a crucial area of the nation's intellectual life with such seeming indifference to financial and human consequences," President Giamatti of Yale declared in a speech last fall. "Science is at the core of the university's mission," he said. "Whatever strikes at that core cuts at the heart of the university."

A slowdown in the pace of innovation is a key cause of America's economic sluggishness and declining competitiveness in world markets. Basic research enlarges and builds knowledge leading to technological innovation. Much of America's basic research is carried out in universities. It doesn't make sense to blunt scientific creativity, inquiry, and experimentation on campus through still more layers of red tape that serve only to keep paper-shuffling bureaucrats busy.



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REPORTS & COMMENT

JORDAN: A Moderate's Role

Jordan's King Hussein, cautious protector of more than a million Palestinian refugees, nonetheless clings to his strong ties with the West and with Israel.

The capital of Jordan is a mountain-top oasis in what geographers call the Syrian desert. It is a city of open spaces and well-washed streets, of soaring high-rises and superhighways that leap across ravines, of nightclubs and flower gardens and neon signs. Occa-

sionally a hooded woman glides by, the hem of her robe brushing the sidewalk. Now and then the perfume of Oriental spices enriches a breeze. But a more common sight is a teenager in blue jeans on a motorbike, and exhaust fumes are a more pervasive odor. As Middle Eastern cities are measured, Amman is far from exotic, and decidedly bourgeois.

When Amman emerged from historical oblivion after World War I, it was a village like others in the desert, save for a glorious Roman amphitheater around which were clustered the squalid homes of its 3000 inhabitants. In biblical times, it had been the seat of Israel's rivals, the Ammonites, about whom a testy God once said to Moses (Deut. 23:6), "You shall never seek their welfare or their good will all your life long." During the Roman era it became a wealthy market town, and with the coming of Christianity it served as the seat of influential bishops. Then, in 635, Amman passed to the conquering Arabs, under whom it receded into obscurity.

The Hashemite dynasty rediscovered Amman. A noble Arabian family claiming descent from the Prophet, the Hashemites led a cavalry column that joined up with Britain's army to defeat



At prayer in Amman

the Ottoman Turks in 1917. On the establishment of the British mandate in the region, they were rewarded with an emirate for the Hashemite prince, Abdullah. Abdullah named his domain, a desert expanse east of the Jordan River, "Transjordan," and fixed its capital at Amman. When the mandate was dissolved in 1946, he took the title of king.

Alone among the Arab rulers of the region, Abdullah showed some sympathy for the Jews who, following a biblical injunction, were resettling across the Jordan in Palestine. Never secure on his throne, he saw them as potential allies—a view presently shared by his grandson Hussein—against the Arab neighbors who threatened him. His regard for the Jews did not stop him from attacking during Israel's war of independence, or from seizing the land set aside in 1948 under the UN partition plan for Palestinian rule. Having added the West Bank's fertile fields to the East Bank's desert, he renamed his kingdom "Jordan." Then, to the dismay of his Arab peers, he hinted that he was ready for peace (though he never realized the dream) with the new Jewish state.

By now Amman, having pushed its boundaries out from the Romans' amphitheater, was a thriving city of 400,000. The Hashemites, though pious Moslems, had proved to be modern and Westernized in their style of rule. With British help, they saw to it that municipal services kept pace with population. Today the city numbers nearly a million, but, if downtown Amman shows a dignified shabbiness from age, little of it qualifies as a slum. Amman is one of those rare cities, East or West, that convey a sense of being well governed.

Amman became a boomtown, however, only after petrodollars began pouring into the Arab world. Even the minarets on today's skyline are new, and steel scaffolds continue to intrude unattractively upon the landscape. The shops bulge with food, fashions, and imported gadgets. Peugeots and Mercedes race for space in the traffic circles. Amman has no unemployment. In fact, short of labor, it has become the host to Egyptians who tend the gardens, to Koreans who raise the skyscrapers, to Filipinos and Pakistanis who wait on the tables and clean the rooms in the Intercontinental and the Holiday Inn.

The message of this often frenetic pursuit of wealth, as King Hussein



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In January, 1973, a number of suspected fraudulent claims from the Baltimore area were submitted to the Insurance Crime Prevention Institute for review. An agent in Baltimore was assigned to determine if there was any substance to the allegation of fraud.

He soon noticed that the names of certain doctors appeared in a remark-

ably large number of insurance claims for bodily injuries sustained in automobile accidents. As he continued his investigation, the names of certain attorneys representing "victims" of accidents began appearing with the same remarkable frequency.

Was it coincidence—or was it fraud? Only legwork could determine the truth. So the agent began the laborious process of documenting the pertinent information from hundreds of files involving these doctors and lawyers and, finally, of interviewing claimant-witnesses. Until, at last, it seemed clear that there was enough iron-clad information to warrant prosecution.

By the summer of 1974, arrests were being made. A number of Baltimore doctors and lawyers were indicted and tried. Results: five convicted doctors served time in prison; six were fined a total of \$67,000. Five lawyers were convicted of insurance fraud; two resigned their practices; two had their licenses suspended; six were disbarred.

What is the point? The policyholder benefited. According to the Insurance Crime Prevention Institute, the average Baltimore resident today pays an estimated 8% to 10% less for automobile insurance than he would have, had not ICPI cracked the fraud ring.

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JORDAN

makes clear, is that Jordan is not interested in war. Its cities are a few minutes from Israel's bomber bases. Its new potash works on the Dead Sea are within range of Israel's artillery, and its new dam on the Yarmuk is an easy target for Israel's rockets. As an Arab, Hussein cannot forget the Palestinians, but, as Abdullah's disciple, neither can he dismiss the Jews. "Palestinians should recognize the rights of Israel to exist," he told a group of reporters recently. "And shouldn't Israel also recognize the rights of the Palestinians on the soil of their homeland?" Hussein would like nothing more than an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians that would relieve him of the worry of fighting on his western flank.

Born in 1935, Hussein was crowned twenty-eight years ago, at the age of eighteen. To foreigners, he is perhaps best known as the diminutive king who flies his own plane and has survived repeated assassination attempts. Inside the kingdom, he is respected for intelligence, piety, and courage. In his years as king, he has never been touched by scandal, and his government is probably as free of corruption as any in the Third World. He is no democrat, but he has also shown no taste for tyranny or conquest. Twice divorced, once widowed, he is currently married to the former Lisa Halaby, an American who recently gave birth to his eighth child, a son. If his rule has any overriding purpose, it is surely to pass on his throne intact to his Hashemite heirs.

Until Ali, his five-year-old son, comes of age, the heir apparent is Hussein's thirty-four-year-old brother, Oxford-educated Crown Prince Hassan. The king has deputized Hassan with increasing powers in the crucial areas of security, the economy, and foreign affairs. Hussein has such love and esteem for his brother, some say, that if the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is settled to Jordan's satisfaction, he may one day abdicate to him. I met with Hassan in the royal palace, a complex of low-lying, neatly tended, closely guarded buildings spread over a forested hillside in central Amman. Instead of the forbidding man I had expected from the fierce eyes and dark beard of his photograph, I found him quite relaxed, even jovial, given to broad pronouncements softened with wit.

Hassan, though critical of Israel,

scrupulously avoided the strident language common to so many Arab leaders. He refrained from denouncing the Camp David agreement while deploring its "inadequacy" for achieving Arab objectives. What stands in the way of Jordan's participation in the peace process, he said, is not the negotiating framework but Israel's persistent refusal to yield anything to Palestinian aspirations.

"It is not in our interest to see instability anywhere in the region," Hassan said. "But centrism has a difficult time ahead. Not only is there a polarization between left and right and a growing ethnocentrism among those who live here in the Middle East, there is also the possibility of a confrontation between the superpowers, especially with oil as an igniting element. That's why, to Jordan, the major threat is conflict proceeding from the absence of a comprehensive political settlement."

King Hussein, like Hassan, recognizes of course that Jordan, surrounded on all sides by more powerful rival states, is too small to survive in political isolation. From the start, Jordan has been a client state, maneuvering for room within a framework of dependence. Beholden first to Great Britain, it became the recipient, after the British retreat from the Middle East, of America's philanthropy. Its status shifted again after OPEC's price revolution in 1973, when its oil-producing neighbors, most notably Saudi Arabia, began furnishing subsidies far in excess of those ever bestowed by the West. Under an agreement that extends into the late 1980s, Jordan now receives from the treasures of the Gulf \$1.25 billion a year, which is nearly half the national income. Without oil, Hussein has thus succeeded in becoming a beneficiary of the Arab oil bonanza.

The quid pro quo for these benefits is, according to a declaration of the Arab summit, Jordan's services as a "confrontation state." In the past, Hussein has been a reluctant soldier in the wars with Israel. Jordan sat out the Sinai campaign of 1956. In the Six-Day War of 1967, Hussein came late to the battlefield, and proceeded to lose his West Bank provinces. In the Yom Kippur war, six years later, Jordan's participation was limited to a small force sent in support of Syria on the Golan Heights. Yet, despite its unimpressive record against the Israelis, Jordan's army is considered one of the toughest in the Arab world.

In reality, Jordan's chief obligation to its benefactors consists of confrontation not with Israel but with its Arab neighbors, Syria and Iraq. Like Jordan, the oil autocracies of the Persian Gulf—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates—see a more immediate threat to their security from these two maverick Arab states than from Israel. The Gulf States pay Jordan for an armed force whose mission is less to do battle with the Jews than to safeguard an uneasy peace among the Arabs.

Fundamental to this peace is the stability of the Hashemite throne itself, which Hussein is astute enough to understand cannot be preserved by arms alone. Throughout most of his reign he had to contend with a social turbulence that was, in part, the consequence of widespread poverty. When the petrodollars started rolling in, he decided to invest the bulk of them in a program of economic growth.

Hussein's preoccupation, then and now, was the million or more Palestinians, half the population of the kingdom, who crossed the Jordan in the wars of 1948 and 1967. These refugees greatly reduce his freedom to maneuver. They are different from the desert dwellers of the East Bank, mostly Bedouin in origin, the native constituents of the Hashemites. The Palestinians come from the fertile side of the river and, long exposed to Western culture, their traditions are not only agrarian but also commercial and intellectual. With no intrinsic loyalty to Hussein, they tend to measure the monarchy by its effort in helping them regain the homeland from which they fled.

From the start, Jordan treated Palestinian refugees more generously than did other Arab states in which they found refuge. Hussein chose not to isolate them in sordid camps, perpetuating their dependency. He invited them to take posts in the civil service and in teaching, to establish businesses, to own land and attend the universities, to live where they liked. He granted them citizenship, and allowed them to travel around the world on Jordanian passports to plead the Palestinian cause. He excluded them only from positions of political power, by retaining the major governmental posts, along with control of the army and the police, in faithful Jordanian hands.

Early indications suggested that his generosity was a mistake. Palestinians

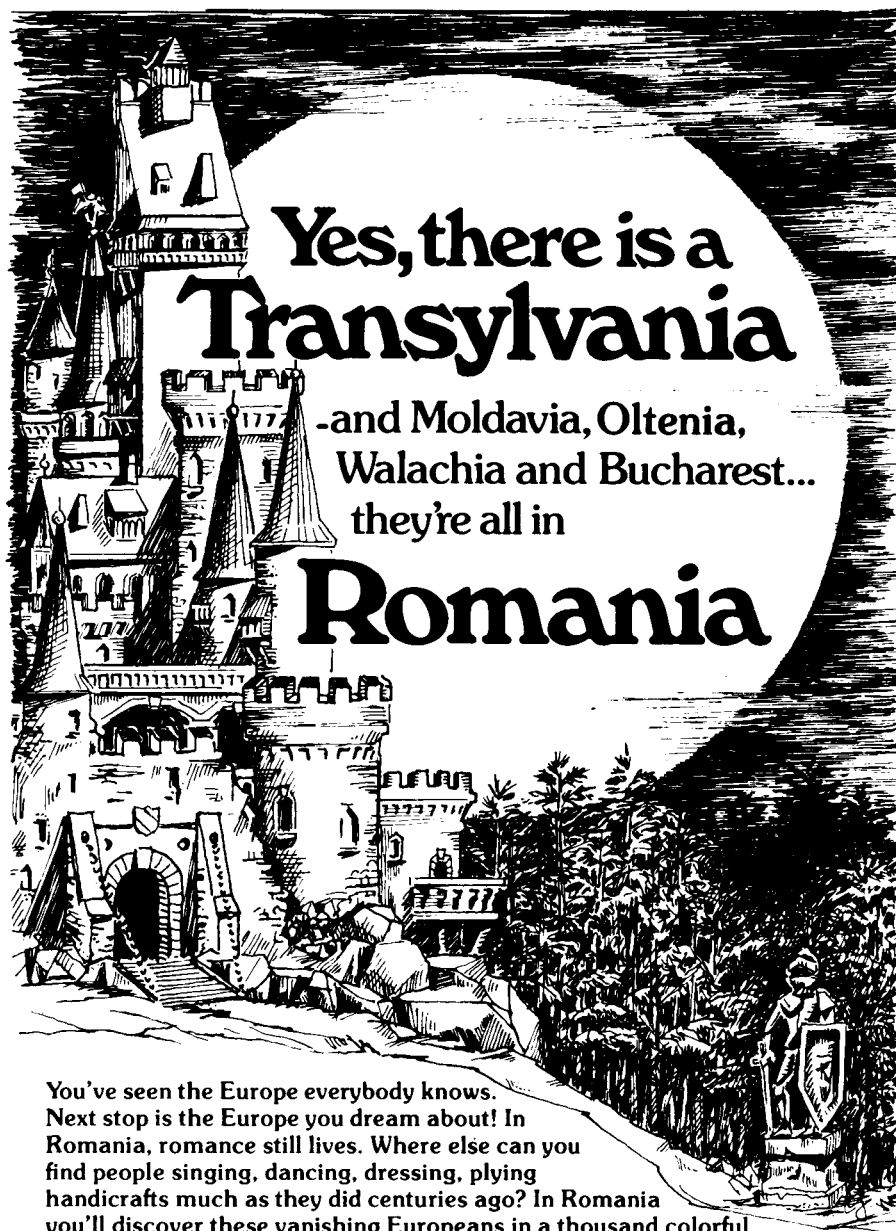
gravitated not into Jordanian society, as Hussein had hoped, but into their own state-within-a-state, a menace to his throne. The Palestine Liberation Organization seized control of the refugee camps and segments of the countryside, while its commandos roamed the cities at will. Hussein's army finally challenged the PLO in "Black September," 1970. While Israel's army, mobilized at the frontier, kept the Syrians at bay—vindicating Abdullah's strategy—Hussein defeated the PLO forces in bloody battle and drove them out of the country. Still, Hussein desisted from a policy of repression, and when the Gulf states offered to shore up his monarchy with their newly acquired wealth, he used the money to divert the Palestinians to work.

Hussein's investments are the fuel for Jordan's economic acceleration. The state has put huge sums into heavy and light industry, irrigation to open new land, railroads, power plants, telephones, a new international airport, and expansion of Jordan's only port, Aqaba, on the Red Sea. Jordanian television, particularly popular in Israel, is beamed throughout the Middle East. New waterworks slake Amman's ever growing thirst, and caravans of trucks cross the desert on newly paved roads to Damascus, Baghdad, and the Arab cities of the Persian Gulf.

Still, as experience throughout the Third World has shown, public investment has limited value without hardworking and efficient manpower. "The loss of land by a predominantly agricultural society," a prominent Palestinian intellectual explained to me, "drove it to compensate by searching for more secure and reliable ways to earn a living." Palestinian exiles are the engine of Jordan's economic boom.

Most Palestinians are graduates of the excellent network of schools established for the refugees by the UN, and Palestinian families are renowned for saving money to send their sons to universities. The ratio of university degrees among Palestinians is triple that of the Arab world. Palestinians tend to combine good education with ambition and industry and an aptitude for business and management. Their services are in demand not only in Jordan but in every oil-rich Arab country.

As the economies of the oil states have developed, in fact, the migration of Palestinians from Jordan has quickened. Today, an estimated half-million Palestinians with Jordanian passports



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JORDAN

work abroad, more than in Jordan itself, at salaries that would have seemed incredible before the petrodollar deluge. All of these newly rich countries, sensing a loosening of tradition and political power, seem apprehensive of Palestinian dynamism. Even now, Jordan alone has extended the privileges of citizenship to the Palestinians, and some countries, by such measures as forbidding the company of wives and children, make life for them extremely austere. Few Palestinians are likely to remain permanently in these OPEC lands, but as long as the boom lasts, a great many of them will continue to find jobs.

Each year, these expatriates send back about \$800 million to stoke Jordan's prosperity. The government has little control over this money, too much of which goes into real estate speculation and imported consumer items such as cars and TV sets. Yet the economy appears sound: inflation is 14 percent, modest by worldwide standards, and the currency is stable. Most important, despite the level of speculation and consumption, Jordan's banks are so awash with cash that they have plenty left over for productive investments.

The investors, big and small, are overwhelmingly Palestinians. Whether clothing factories or machine shops or grocery stores, their establishments have enlarged the Palestinian stake in Jordan. The consequence has been an increasing identification of the Palestinian community with Hussein, imparting to the regime a kind of practical legitimacy. Within the past two or three years there has been much less talk among the Palestinians of crossing the river to go home.

Slowly, with hardly anyone's noticing, Jordan's prosperity has transformed the problem of the Palestinian refugees. The prospect of several million Palestinians migrating back across the Jordan to reclaim old homes has, since independence in 1948, paralyzed the Israelis. The 100,000 Palestinians still living in sordid camps in Lebanon, along with the 25,000 or so encamped in Syria, may continue to dream of the world as it once was. But most refugees—the million or more who fled to Jordan—have established roots where they live, and few are likely to go back.

The refugee problem has not van-

ished, but new conditions require that it be redefined. The Palestinians believe as strongly as ever that their lands were snatched from them inhumanly and illegally. Through the United Nations, the world still recognizes their rights as refugees, which they will not give up. Although the UN's camps have been largely depopulated, few Palestinians have allowed themselves to be scratched from the refugee rolls. To most of them, the UN's refugee card is an IOU from the international community, legitimizing a right of indemnity, if not of repatriation. But the fact that more Palestinians seem ready to accept indemnity in place of repatriation today makes the refugee problem less intractable than it once appeared.

To Hussein, this change among the Palestinians seems, logically, to have moved peace with Israel a giant step closer, yet peace remains distant. I occasionally heard in Amman that the king wants to consummate a mission conveyed to him by his grandfather Abdullah. But he cannot make peace with Israel without first finding a formula acceptable to the Palestinians living in his kingdom, and so far he and the Israelis have not come close to agreeing on one.

The Carter administration seemed to forget Hussein's Palestinian dilemma when it assumed he would join the Camp David peace talks in 1978. American negotiators believed that Camp David provided a reasonable framework for the attainment of Palestinian goals. But to the Palestinians, Camp David was a devils' bargain by which Israel restored Sinai to Egypt in return for legitimation of its own rule on the West Bank and in Gaza.

Hussein's advisers in Amman told me that the king was at first intrigued by Camp David's promise of "full autonomy" and, within five years, the establishment of a regime that would "recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." The phrase was the same one the Palestinians themselves used. But when Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin announced that the vows made at Camp David excluded any prospect of real autonomy, much less the progression to a sovereign Palestinian state, Hussein rejected all participation. Plausibly, he reasoned that a million angry Palestinians would never acquiesce in his sanctioning a process that seemed likely to prolong Israeli rule.

Though Hussein has spurned re-

peated pleas from Washington to reconsider, he has taken pains to maintain relations on a cordial level. Since Camp David he has twice visited the United States. He regularly consults with the American ambassador in Amman, a shrewd and engaging professional named Nicholas Veliotes. The embassy staff finds Jordanian officials accessible, the post useful for monitoring the Palestinian community and much of the Arab world, Amman a trifle dull but very friendly. After Camp David, the Carter administration continued a program of \$60 million in aid to Jordan, and last year promised to deliver new tanks to the Jordanian army. But compared to the petrodollar infusion, American bounty is small, and Camp David simply confirmed Hussein's attachment to the Arab camp.

When Iraq attacked Iran, then, Hussein's first priority was to safeguard his Arab flank. Though he had nothing to gain by going to war for Iraq, he had much to lose if Arabs started warring against one another. Perverse as ever, Syria sided with Iran. But Jordan's other Arab neighbors, irritated by the shrill cries of Iran's ayatollahs, took the more natural course and rallied around Iraq.

By assuming a leadership role, Hussein enhanced his credentials and acquired, among his Arab peers, room to maneuver. In the process he provoked Syria, which replied—chiefly as a diversion from its own internal problems—with a dubious threat of invasion. Yet Hussein never considered sending troops or arms to Iraq. He cheered enthusiastically for Iraq and stepped up the flow of supplies along the Aqaba-to-Baghdad road, which had been built with Iraqi money anyway. He exhorted the Arab world to unity, hardly a risk. Otherwise, Hussein did nothing.

After Camp David, Hussein had argued that, in the interests of credibility, the Arab states must undertake a peace initiative of their own. He thought he had achieved something of a victory in Baghdad several months later, when the Arab summit went on record for the first time in favor of "the Arab nation's commitment to a just peace," based on separate Israeli and Palestinian states. But the United States paid no attention, and Israel cited the statement's conditions rather than its concessions. As for the Arab governments themselves, they later de-

nied any suggestion of a retreat, and so the attempt at initiative died.

Like Israel, Hussein looks upon the prospect of a Palestinian state with trepidation. He cannot forget that, but for "Black September," the PLO would have driven him from power, and he recognizes that an aggressively nationalistic Palestinian state could turn east as well as west in search of adventure. On orders from the Arab summit of 1974, he accepted the preeminence of the PLO as Palestinian spokesman, and he conspicuously refrains from criticizing the organization for fear of offending the Palestinians in his kingdom. But he has had no dealings with the PLO since 1970, and only in the past year or so, in the interests of Arab solidarity, has he consented to restore even the façade of a formal relationship.

Meanwhile, Hussein has quietly begun to challenge the PLO on the West Bank, from which his army ignominiously retreated fourteen years ago. Prince Hassan assured me that the king had always recognized his "ongoing de jure responsibilities" toward the West Bank, but only since the PLO's decline has he started exercising them again. Palestinians recognize that the PLO's guerrilla campaign, though bloody, has been no more than a nuisance to Israel. The PLO's diplomatic displays have led nowhere. Increasingly

under Syrian patronage, the PLO has joined Damascus since the start of the Iraq-Iran war in becoming alienated from the Arabs' political mainstream. Under the curious rules by which Israel's army occupies the West Bank, Jordanian officials have begun to return. No doubt with the tacit approval of his oil-rich patrons, and of Israel, Hussein has thus signaled an intention to reassert a claim to speak for the Palestinians in any peace deliberations.

The men around Hussein insist that, though Jordan's perceptions are different from Israel's, its interests are not. What Hussein sees is that the Palestinians cannot be denied the right to their own state, and the PLO cannot be excluded from it. But he also believes that Palestinians living in a state of their own would, ultimately, prove to be as bourgeois in their outlook as those within his kingdom. As Hassan said to me, whatever the dangers of a Palestinian state, they are less than the dangers that derive from the instability of not having one. Most of the men around Hussein believe that the Palestinians would be quick to accept a moderating association with Jordan and that, once Israel conceded the principle of withdrawal, guarantees assuring the security of both the Hashemite kingdom and the Jewish state could be easily negotiated.

—MILTON VIORST

be summoned in the event of a problem. Maps of the world and of the United States divided into congressional districts covered the painted cement-block walls of Haig's office. On a large table lay stacks of books and papers, materials for the oversubscribed seminar he had taught at Penn on "Presidential Decision-Making" and for two "studies" he was preparing, one on NATO defense needs and the other on the organization of the presidency. In this setting, Haig wore his veneer of elegance like a diving suit. His clothes were impeccably tailored. A Gucci belt and a flashy gold ID bracelet set each other off. His gun-metal hair resisted virtually all movement as he paced, and somehow this eerily smooth man of fifty-five seemed to be able to smoke cigarettes almost without polluting the air.

"I don't mean to sound arrogant or megalomaniac," he said, sounding steady and confident, "but I think I have seen the office, I think I have had the experience abroad, and I think I have had the experience at home to make me believe that I am as qualified—and more—than anybody in the field, given the unique challenges facing our country . . . The modern military career—certainly mine—has been one of extensive breadth. And I for the last twenty years have been fairly close to the highest levels of policy."

Close, but not yet the very top. Could he do it? Should he add his name to the ten already declared Republican candidates for President? A few days later, Haig convened half a dozen informal advisers in a suite at the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel in Washington to take up those questions. GOP fund-raisers, strategists, established political operators, they were men still without a horse. Some urged Haig to get into the race at once, because the world situation cried out for a returning military man with clear vision, a latter-day Eisenhower. Others told him to hang back, wait for a stalemate to develop in the primaries. After five hours or so of listening, he flew off to Dallas for a board meeting of Texas Instruments, Inc.

Haig had discovered for himself that while he had many listeners and admirers, he had no real political base. One scenario had him building a solid bloc of Republican delegates in Pennsylvania and New Jersey while he swept into Florida and won that state's presidential primary with a coalition of retired

ALEXANDER HAIG: Pragmatist at State

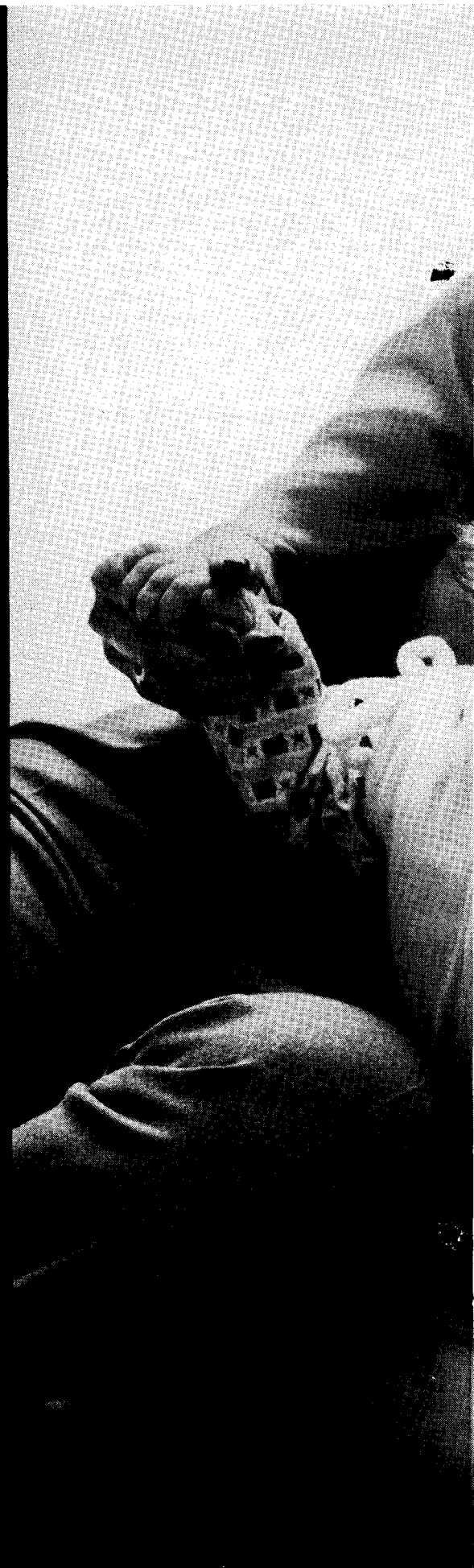
America's new secretary of state is no intellectual, but those who know him say he understands the limits of U.S. power, won't make promises he can't keep, and spends his political capital wisely.

December 1979—Alexander Haig was home from the front. Nearly five years as commander of NATO forces in Europe had given him a new lease on life. No more was he portrayed simply as a survivor of Watergate, the White House chief of staff who stuck with Richard Nixon until the very end; instead, he was an articulate, troubled diagnostician of the national health, a man with a message about the decline of America's position in the world. For six months after his return

from Brussels, Haig had traveled back and forth across the States (thirty-five of them), giving more than 100 speeches and casting himself as a great big maybe in the 1980 presidential sweepstakes. Now he was in Philadelphia, his hometown, weighing whether adulation on the lecture circuit could be translated into delegates in the convention hall.

Brussels it was not. The headquarters for Haig's brief public drama of decision-making was a large, grungy corner room within the Foreign Policy Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. The general's coming had transformed the usually solemn FPRI: an impressively bearlike guard, posted outside the elevator on the third floor, treated all visitors as potential terrorists. (Haig had been the target of an assassination attempt just before he left Belgium.) Every desk was equipped with a "panic button" so that help could

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HAIG

military officers and their families, the Cuban exile community, and the Jewish community. But even with a 49 percent recognition factor in the polls (substantially higher than Jimmy Carter's at a similar moment four years earlier), Haig regarded that as a pipe dream. And he could not realistically present himself as a potential vice-presidential nominee, because he would bring no specific, tangible political strengths to a national ticket. To make a credible race, he concluded, would require two years of full-time work. He felt electable but not nominatable.

On the Saturday before Christmas, in Philadelphia, Haig phoned at least ten national and local reporters and the two out-of-work conservative activists who had already set up a "Draft Haig" office in Alexandria, Virginia. He had decided it "wouldn't be a constructive thing" for him to run. The day after Christmas, as he relaxed in the sun in Key Biscayne, Florida, the board of directors of United Technologies Corporation, a major defense contractor and the largest employer in the state of Connecticut, announced that it had elected him its president. Haig had privately found himself a comfortable new niche. As one Republican strategist who had been consulted by Haig put it later, the general "found a job with more power, a higher salary, more perks, and more appointments to make" than he would have had as President of the United States—"plus, no ethics law to worry about."

On the Saturday morning after Christmas, Haig went into his office at the Foreign Policy Research Institute to pull together some loose ends. He called Richard Nixon to wish him a happy new year and to explain his own plans. Nixon congratulated Haig on the wise decisions he had made.

December 1980—For six weeks after the election of Ronald Reagan, Haig's name was thrown back and forth like a volleyball. At one point he seemed to have a good chance at the Defense Department, but Reagan's advisers concluded that it would be too much to have to go to Congress for special legislation to circumvent the legal requirement of civilian control of the military. Soon he became the most-mentioned prospect for the State Department. The press said he could never survive

the questions about his past, but Haig maintained that he could answer them all. Senate Democrats said they would go after Haig, but that only made the Republicans, newly in charge of the Senate, rally to his side; and it gave Reagan his first cause to defend.

It was all as if according to script. There was Haig, the most controversial, and therefore in many respects the most interesting, member of the Reagan Cabinet. At a news conference where several nominees were presented, it was Haig who attracted most of the questions. He reacted proudly, cautiously, just a touch defiantly. Then he went down to the State Department and there dismissed most members of the transition team, whose leaks and impulsive declarations had caused the President-elect so much trouble. Haig the problem would instantly convert himself into Haig the problem-solver.

What had happened to the general's much-vaunted new business career? His year at United Technologies—barely ten months, really, if you subtract the time necessary for triple-bypass open-heart surgery in the spring—turned out to be just another quick assignment, standard operating procedure for a career military officer. He had gone to Hartford, taken charge, and, by all appearances, done a competent job. What he brought to it, above all, was his cold, hard-driving manner, his ability to make others feel vaguely uncomfortable in his presence. No one has suggested that he was especially innovative or that he had any clear impact on the corporation, although, through his tendency to attract publicity, he did get its name in the paper. And he made a great deal of money (probably more than a million dollars, including his speaking fees during his first six months back from Europe).

Haig's ambivalence about his future was clear all along. Even as he was buying a nineteenth-century Federal Era home in Farmington, Connecticut—the first house he has ever owned—he was maneuvering himself into a spot as a delegate from Connecticut to the Republican convention in Detroit. There he delivered a rousing speech, warning that "the Soviet threat has now become a threat to the very nexus of Western vitality—political, economic, and military." There could be no doubt that he was available, or that he was a committed, cheerleading Reaganite.

Oddly enough, when Reagan turned to the task of selecting a secretary of

state, he found very few options. Henry Kissinger's return to Foggy Bottom had been excluded from the outset, because he was anathema to the very people who secured the nomination for Reagan. That left a short list of people with solid reputations in foreign affairs who would be eligible to serve this Republican President. Haig's main support came from the East Coast moderates in the party—the "Rockefeller faction"—many of whom had been willing to support a Haig candidacy for President and now needed reassurance that Reagan was not a warmonger. Ironically, a few figures on the extreme right of the party, such as Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, also favored Haig, because he had always been polite and deferential to them and they thought they could influence him. As an intellectual base of sorts, he had the "neo-conservatives," the former liberal Democrats who now found the world an uncongenial place and liked what Haig had been saying. Indeed, the first person to jump to the general's defense on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* was none other than Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* and author of Reagan's favorite election-year book, *The Present Danger*.

Once the offer was made, Haig was on the next plane back to Washington. He was not even worried about the ethics law. And he signed up his old Democratic patron, Joseph Califano, to help him with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the confirmation hearings.

It is not easy to play the role of a Cassandra in America today. But Haig selected that part and, relying on his cachet as the returning Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR)—and as the purveyor of the allies' frustration and unhappiness with the United States—carried it off quite effectively. His real debut had come in the summer of 1979, when he testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the pending SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union. In the byzantine world of Capitol Hill, the promise of Haig on the agenda was enough to permit the relatively anti-SALT Armed Services Committee to win the Senate Caucus Room and live public television coverage away from the relatively pro-SALT Foreign Relations Committee. The general did not disappoint anyone. Senators and members of the audience virtually squirmed with pleasure as Haig all but

winked at the camera and ad-libbed that "Americans want to be number one." SALT II had flaws, he asserted, but more important than that, American defense capabilities were on the wane. "A firm, unambiguous demonstration of renewed U.S. strength and ability to lead is overdue," he said. "The global power balance is viewed in Europe as shifting against us, and we can ignore it no longer."

On the road, Haig did not always sparkle. In small groups of big-money types, he sometimes seemed awkward. When he had to share a platform with someone else, he was occasionally overshadowed. But on his own, speaking to a large audience about grand issues of geostrategy and military capability, Haig was at his very best. His message was direct and chilling; it played into the angry, frightened mood of the American people. It still does.

The period of healing that was so necessary in post-Vietnam, post-Watergate U.S. foreign policy, says the general, has gone too far. Now the nation is being doubted by friends and enemies alike on three crucial grounds: consistency, reliability, and relevancy. Looking back over the past two decades, Haig sees "an overdose of dialectic" and "a whipsaw effect" that have destroyed bipartisan foreign policy and virtually paralyzed the country internationally. "Those in power are perceived and attacked by those out of power as being immoral, irrational, and incompetent," he complains. "Then, when the critics assume power, they have a vested interest in carrying out the most extreme aspects of their criticism. This has had devastating consequences."

Once his listeners have been softened up, Haig delivers the body blow: "America is no longer the America it was, and that's largely attributable to Vietnam, the mistakes of Vietnam." The mistakes Haig sees in the Vietnam experience, and the lessons he draws from it, are not the same as those of most liberal critics. In his revisionist view, Washington should have reacted to Communist mischief in Southeast Asia in the mid-1960s with more "vigorous and direct" steps, "up to and including mobilization." That way, when the United States intervened, it could have done it "right"; but in all probability, he argues, "had we taken those steps before intervening, we never would have had to intervene." The Soviet Union, respecting resolve and clarity of intentions more than any-

thing else, would have pressured its Vietnamese clients to behave differently. "It's been my experience with the Soviets that they perform far more constructively—or at least predictably—when we deal with them rather directly. It serves no purpose to confuse them, to lead them to take risks which otherwise they might not take."

Today, Haig laments, the United States is not even capable of a general mobilization. Foggy-headed systems analysts at the Pentagon have redefined the real and potential threats to America in a specious way that makes the country less able to respond to



Alexander Haig

grave contingencies. The military is more than 500,000 reservists short, and Haig's experience in Europe has taught him that the all-volunteer Army suffers from high costs and low quality. No wonder, he says with a sardonic chuckle, that on his return he found among Americans "a nagging concern that we are a nation less and less able or willing to preserve our vital interests abroad"—a concern that he believes has grown to the point of eclipsing popular worries over inflation or energy. Meanwhile, the crises roll in as if custom-designed to prove Haig's point: Cuba, Iran, Afghanistan, possibly Poland. And Haig's voice takes on more and more of an I-told-you-so quality.

Part of Haig's appeal to impatient, worried Americans is that he seems to be the antithesis of the people who worked in Carter's State Department.

He comes off as a man of action who understands how the world really works and would not turn sentimental notions such as human rights into precepts of foreign policy; he has spoken with appreciation of American friends such as the shah of Iran, warts and all. Many people are also drawn to his image as a tough military officer who can perform the most unsavory task with total aplomb. As Nixon wrote in his memoirs, Haig "was always loyal to the commander he served."

The story of Alexander Meigs Haig, Jr. is as all-American as they come. His father, an up-and-coming Philadelphia lawyer, died at the age of thirty-nine, when young Al was ten. Although they could not really keep up with the life-style there, his mother held the family together in an affluent suburb. His older sister became a lawyer and his younger brother went into the priesthood; Al always dreamed of the romantic military life. He saved enough money from odd jobs during parochial school to pay for two years at Notre Dame, and then, on his second try, he won an appointment to West Point. He never stood out there academically, but he drew one good assignment after another as a career soldier. He served with General Douglas MacArthur in postwar Japan and was a member of the younger generation of American heroes in the Korean War. After various staff positions at West Point and Annapolis and in Europe, he picked up a master's degree in international relations at Georgetown University and then began a string of assignments at the Pentagon.

It was there, in the early 1960s, as a lieutenant colonel, that Haig was noticed and that he developed powerful civilian—and Democratic—sponsors: then Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance and Joseph Califano, who was special assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. As an aide to Califano, Haig had a reputation as a workaholic who seldom left his office before eleven P.M. In due course, McNamara and Vance sought to reward him with an early promotion to colonel, but the Army balked, because there was a hot war going on in Vietnam and Haig had not yet served in it. Off he went in 1966, winning his promotion as well as the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism in the battle of Ap Gu. After six months back at West Point as deputy commandant, Haig was invited to the

HAIG

Pierre Hotel in New York late in 1968 by Henry Kissinger, Nixon's newly appointed national security adviser. On the glowing recommendation of Califano, Kissinger selected Haig as his senior military aide.

The rest is history. Haig lived by his wits and his stamina in the Nixon/Kissinger White House. His hours were, if possible, even longer than they had been at the Pentagon in the Kennedy and Johnson years. Kissinger, emerging as a social lion on the Washington scene and an international celebrity, would often hit the party circuit in the evening, leaving Haig behind and promising to come back and do more work. Haig simply appropriated much of the work for himself. Sometimes Nixon, on his nocturnal prowls around the mansion, would discover Haig working in Kissinger's office; they would chat animatedly, with Haig playing cleverly to the President's prejudices and suspicions. Before long, Nixon was sending Haig off on special missions to Southeast Asia and other trouble spots, and after eighteen months he became Kissinger's official deputy.

When Reagan chose Haig as his secretary of state, some commentators portrayed him as a kind of secret agent for the restoration of Nixon's respectability and influence and, perhaps more important, as a stand-in for the former wizard of American foreign policy, a Kissinger-without-tears. But that interpretation misses important subtleties.

Haig now refuses to talk publicly or privately about either man, except to extol Kissinger as a statesman of genius and to note a growing nostalgia for Nixon's foreign policy successes. By all accounts, however, the Nixon-Kissinger-Haig triangle was one of the more complicated love-hate relationships in the history of the White House. Though Haig was Kissinger's protégé, he was also his rival, and Nixon encouraged both roles. Presumably Kissinger was glad to be rid of Haig when Nixon advanced him ahead of 240 higher-ranking officers, gave him two more stars (he was already a two-star general), and made him Army Vice Chief of Staff in January 1973. (The President had intended to make him Chief of Staff, but Haig, aware of the resentment already directed at him by his Army peers, declined to be catapulted

ahead of Creighton Abrams, who had commanded U.S. forces in Vietnam.) Hardly had Kissinger breathed a sigh of relief when Haig was back, in May, to superintend the White House bunker for the catastrophic final fifteen months of the Nixon presidency. The rivalry flared anew, with Kissinger—by then secretary of state as well as national security adviser—even feuding with Haig over who would get the bedroom next to the President's during his trip to Moscow in June 1974.

To read the first volume of Kissinger's memoirs, Haig was little more than an errand boy and a paper-shuffler. To read Nixon's, Haig was sturdy and true, "the strongest man in the whole group" around him at the end. Haig has not yet written his book, although he claims to have had lucrative offers from every major publisher in America.

It is from his five and a half years in and out of the White House that the dark side of the Haig mystique emerges. Those who worked with or near him tend to view him with profound, almost painful ambivalence. "He hung in there until the bitter end, and yet he didn't get tainted in any way," says one Watergate casualty; "things went sour for me, but never for him. He's led a remarkably charmed existence." "I was never sure where the boundary was between Haig and Nixon," notes another former official who had occasion to observe them both closely toward the end; "I despised—and yet admired—Nixon, and I could never understand how Haig could stand to be around him so much . . . Yet I don't think Haig ever pursued a course of action which he thought to be wrong."

Haig did select many of the seventeen people who would be covered in Nixon's program of secret wiretaps, and he passed the names along to J. Edgar Hoover (thus helping Kissinger keep his own hands relatively clean). Some of those wiretaps continued for a very long time, and he handled the sensitive transcripts. It has never been shown that he was aware of the operations of the White House "plumbers," but he was certainly active in trying to build the case against one of the plumbers' prime targets, Daniel Ellsberg. While Army Vice Chief of Staff, Haig turned up in full uniform as a steely witness for the prosecution at Ellsberg's trial in Los Angeles on espionage charges for leaking the Pentagon Papers.

How should Haig be regarded by his countrymen for his actions in that period? With suspicion or with gratitude? The question surely would have been central if he had decided to mount a full-fledged campaign for the Republican nomination in 1980. William Ruckelshaus, who lost his job as Nixon's deputy attorney general during a phone conversation with Haig in the course of the "Saturday Night Massacre" of October 1973, still believes that Haig was too willing to march in step with his Commander in Chief at the time. When Ruckelshaus completed his brief tenure as acting director of the FBI and became deputy attorney general, he recalls, he received "a lecture from Haig on the President's non-involvement in Watergate, rather than questions about my own opinions after running the FBI's investigation of Watergate." And yet. "And yet, for all my suspicions of him," said another man who is no friend of Haig's, "he ends up as the guy to whom the nation should be grateful for Nixon's departure." Indeed, in accounts both public and private, it is Haig who finally persuaded the embattled and embittered President to spare the nation further anguish by resigning.

Gerald Ford was certainly grateful. Soon after he took over from Nixon, he rewarded Haig with the NATO post, an excellent spot for recuperation and rehabilitation. (Once again Haig was a candidate for the job of Army Chief of Staff, and had he received that job, would probably eventually have become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But those jobs require Senate confirmation, and Ford's advisers thought it unwise to risk turning his confirmation hearings into yet another Watergate investigation.) For his part, Haig insists that he is entirely comfortable about his behavior during Nixon's final days in the White House, if still unwilling to review the details. "I will not take credit for anything," he says, "but nor will I take any lumps . . . There are certain times when you have to do things and you do not have the luxury of putting your finger up to see if they are career-enhancing or not. . . I am not self-conscious about anything I did during that period." Still, Haig makes cryptic asides concerning the last phases of the Watergate scandal: "There were considerations of the moment that haven't yet come out. The whole thing was a constitutional crisis, and a lot of people haven't looked at

what kinds of alternatives were possible during that process." He refuses to explain further.

The NATO assignment substantially broadened Haig's scope and gave him new international recognition. He established independent and early credibility with the Europeans. One profile of Haig, in the conservative West German weekly *Die Welt*, praised him as the "strongest leader" ever to command NATO forces: "He masters task after task with brilliant expert knowledge, with unfailing political instinct, and with proverbial persistency. He seems to have discovered more weaknesses in the alliance than all his predecessors." The European infatuation with Haig obviously reinforced his extraordinary self-confidence; the autobiographical description that he routinely provided in response to inquiries after his return stated flatly that "he has built a reputation as being the finest NATO commander since Dwight D. Eisenhower."

For all his enjoyment in the job, Haig found himself chafing at American military policies. He was particularly offended when he learned only at the same time as the European allies about some of the provisions of SALT II (including the controversial "protocol" restricting U.S. deployment of the cruise missile and the MX until the end of 1981). It was an obvious opening to come back and carve out a new role.

The Europeans were the first to show their relief, disguised as glee, when Haig was named secretary of state. They had been frightened by this man Reagan, worried about what his foreign policy might do to what was left of détente. The nomination of Haig, said the spokesman for the West German government, represented "the return of a friend to Europe"; the opposition Christian Democrats called his appointment "a ray of hope for the Atlantic Alliance." Britain's Margaret Thatcher was pleased, and the Elysée Palace in Paris let it be understood that Haig "fits well," perhaps the ultimate French compliment.

Democrats raised plenty of bluster when Haig appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January, but they failed to damage him substantively or to put a chink in his armor of self-assuredness. Indeed, Haig conveyed the impression that he was doing the senators a favor by spending so much time with them. The toughest denunciation of Haig came from Sena-

tor Lowell Weicker of Connecticut, a Republican who had specialized in Watergate investigations in the early 1970s and is not even a member of the Foreign Relations Committee. In the end, the committee approved Haig's nomination by a vote of 15 to 2, with only vague demurrals from Democrats Paul Sarbanes of Maryland and Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts. On the day after the Inauguration, Haig's name sailed through the Senate, 93 to 6.

But when the shouting stops, what kind of secretary of state will Haig be? According to his own prescription, spelled out in the *Washington Quarterly*, the secretary of state should be "the vicar of foreign policy," a coordinator and a loyal servant of the President, but one who is not upstaged by competitors within the government. Beyond that, skeptics point out, Haig's published work and his speeches are filled mostly with pedestrian rhetoric—often with big words and convoluted sentences that do not say much.

"Okay," admits one close associate, "he's not an intellectual who sits there and says, 'On the one hand, on the other hand.' He's an operator, and he hasn't had a whole lot of time for reflection in his life. But he has had some. And I'm not so sure that the secretary of state ought to be a stunning intellect. What we need now is someone who can rank his priorities, spend his political capital wisely, and organize his day."

That he will do—and probably quite well, according to William D. Rogers, a Washington lawyer who was undersecretary of state for economic affairs under Gerald Ford and is frequently sent abroad on official and quasi-official missions by presidents of both parties. Haig will have "enormous advantages," says Rogers, "an opportunity to run the game his own way. He will be working for a President who, unlike Jimmy Carter, will not try to work thirty-six hours a day. Reagan will trust and expect his Cabinet to do their jobs, and no other members of his Cabinet know anything about foreign policy."

It has apparently been made clear that Haig will have preeminence over Reagan's national security adviser, Richard V. Allen, and Haig's associates worry only about the new White House counselor, Edwin Meese, who had a tendency in the post-election period to act like a viceroy, announcing the President-elect's views on various foreign policy issues while Reagan was off chopping wood in California.

When he does get around to speaking on the issues, one colleague predicted, Haig will be cautious: "He has a concept of credibility that is quite sophisticated. He knows that you do not make stupid promises when you are not sure you can deliver. You do not draw lines on the map and promise to protect the Persian Gulf if everyone knows you can't. He knows the limits of American power, especially within the alliance. He knows you have to take into account the other person's view, allies and adversaries, because he knows you have to live with these guys."

He also knows it's never too early to start thinking about 1984, or even 1988.

—SANFORD J. UNGAR

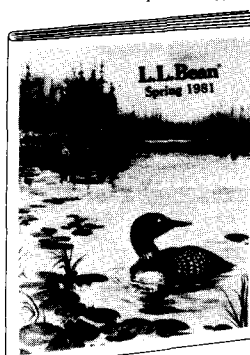
REPORTS & COMMENT CONTRIBUTORS

Milton Viorst's most recent book is *Fire in the Streets*. His last Report for *The Atlantic* was on Cairo, in the September 1980 issue.

Sanford J. Ungar, former managing editor of *Foreign Policy*, is host of *All Things Considered* on National Public Radio and a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*.

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WORLD'S WORST POET?

SIR: Steele Commager makes a persuasive case indeed that William McGonagall was possibly the world's worst poet. A rival claim for that title, however, may be advanced for Julie A. Moore, the Sweet Singer of Michigan (1847-1920), who, in the earlier decades of this century, was the toast of the literary world.

The leading humorous columnists of the day, whenever they ran short of material, delighted in quoting from her works; a typical sample was her "Sketch of Lord Byron's Life":

"Lord Byron" was an Englishman
A poet I believe
His first works in old England
Was poorly received.
Perhaps it was "Lord Byron's" fault
And perhaps it was not.
His life was full of misfortunes
Ah, strange was his lot.

She created, quite unintentionally, in lamenting the death of "Little Willie" in *The Sweet Singer of Michigan Salutes the Public* (1876), a character who became the most frequently epitaphed in literary history as columnists vied with one another to immortalize him. An English versifier, Harry Graham ("Col. D. Streamer"), wrote:

Little Willie in bows and sashes
Fell in the fire and got burned to
ashes.
In the winter, when the weather is
chilly,
No one likes to stir up Willie.

In a sense she wrote her own epitaph in "To My Friends and Critics":

And now, kind friends, what I have
wrote
I hope you will pass o'er,
And not criticize as some have done
Hitherto herebefore.

McGonagall's verses undoubtedly

have outsold the Sweet Singer's, but I wonder if he was ever mentioned in the same breath with Shakespeare, as Julie was by Mark Twain: "The one and unflinching great quality which distinguishes her poetry from Shakespeare's and makes it precious to us is its stern and simple irrelevancy."

WILLIAM J. MILLER
Truro, Mass.

SIR: Oh, come now—William McGonagall couldn't lay a finger on Cyril R. Michael. It was *Come Back to Hindustan and Me* (Bombay, 1941) that taught me what chasms may yet lurk in the depths of an already unfathomable abyss. Witness:

Thus Siddiquah, most true, by fate's
decree,
The siren's call has wailed its
warning note,
The gangway creaks, the moorings
slip the quay,
My heart and dreams sail with thee
on the boat.

("To a Turkish Maid")

The echo whilst floating, sped o'er
the grey patches,
On, on, towards me, with its pathos
and sigh,
And spoke in a language of eloquent
splashes,
Whilst the moon in a silver ether
swam by.

("Consolation")

Art too can spring, with love's
refrain,
From Lads of Revenue,
This scribbling critic will maintain,
That rhythm's up to you!
O! sonneteer of hydrant's stream,
Who spake the Bengal name,
Write on whilst poetical dream,
Of their dismantled fame.

("To a Silent Poet")

DAINIS BISENIEKS
Minneapolis, Minn.

NAMES OF CHRISTMAS

SIR: At the end of his article "The Names of Christmas" (December *Atlantic*), John Ciardi posits some false derivations that merit correction.

He writes, for example, that "X is the ancient sign of Jesus" when, in fact, the "X" is the Greek letter chi, the first letter in the title "Christ" (meaning "Messiah" or "the anointed one"). Next, Mr. Ciardi claims that "IHS is a Latin misrendering of the first three letters of Greek IESOUS . . ." If it were not for his own misrendering of the Greek IHSOUS (remember that Greek is blessed with both a short "e," epsilon, and a long "e," eta, and that the uppercase eta is written H), he would not have had to go fishing for the etymology of the abbreviation. I am glad to see that Mr. Ciardi discerned that *Iesus Hominem Salvator* is not the source. Another one that he might add to his notebook, though of course equally wrong, is that IHS stands for Constantine's *In Hoc Signo (Vinces)*, "In this sign [i.e., the Cross] you will conquer."

Finally, I do not believe that an "unsupported legend," asserting that "Roman guards at the Crucifixion carved these letters mockingly on the cross above the head of Jesus, the legend probably arising by association with the crown of thorns," best explains the INRI. A much simpler, and also correct, explanation is the witness of the Gospels, which tell us that Pontius Pilate ordered the inscription written in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and then placed above Jesus' head as he hung on the cross.

KURT BODLING
Clayton, Mo.

John Ciardi replies:

X is, of course, Greek chi. It was equally used as a sign of the Cross (the

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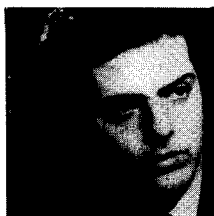
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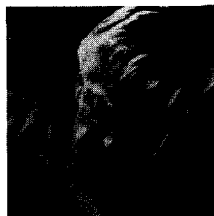
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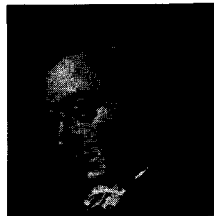
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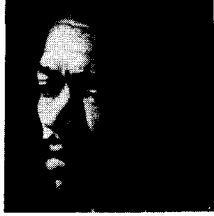
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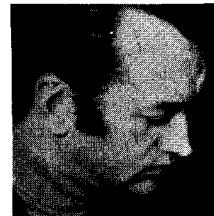
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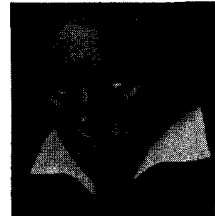
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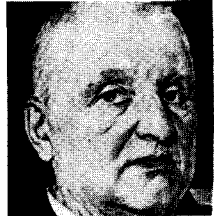
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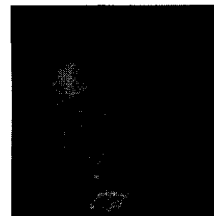
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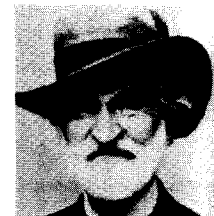
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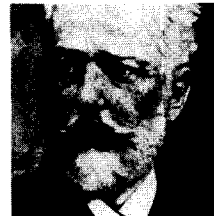
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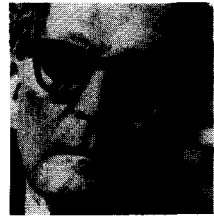
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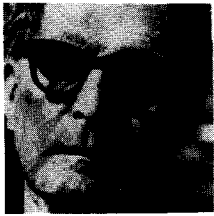
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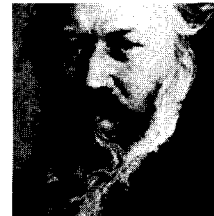
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Cross of St. Andrew) and as a symbol of Christ. I did not confuse eta and epsilon; I reported accurately that some Latin scribe confused the two letters.

The evidence of the truth or falsity of the carving on the cross is easily assembled. Matthew 27:37 says that Pilate ordered the inscription and that it was to read "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Would not this order require an initial E for Latin *ecce*?) Mark 15:26 renders Pilate's ordered inscription as simply "THE KING OF THE JEWS." Luke 23:38 says that Pilate ordered "a superscription . . . in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Mr. Bodling asserts there was such a triple inscription. Would he explain the purpose of the Greek message to Jews and Romans assembled on Calvary?) John 19:19 reports that Pilate himself "wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

This is the stuff of legend—I am not prepared to be as daring as Mr. Bodling in asserting that Luke's account is historical and the others are not. To be more accurate than the facts permit is also an error, and a surly one.

SIR: I was interested by John Ciardi's article in your December issue, but am puzzled by the story of how Sint Nikolaas came to fill Xmas stockings. I lived in Belgium several years, and Sint Nikolaas always came to Holland on a barge accompanied by his little black helper, Zwarte Piet. Both of them still hang on our Xmas tree as ornaments. But no one in the Low Countries, to my knowledge, hangs up stockings to be filled. Sint Nikolaas always visited homes on the evening of December fifth and filled the shoes of the children, which they left neatly lined up outside their closed bedroom doors.

CHARLES E. BACHMAN
New Orleans, La.

ADVICE & CONSENT

SIR: Tom Wolfe was not the man who labeled "the New Journalism," as Deborah McGill says in her article about the subject in the December *Atlantic*.

The culprit was Pete Hamill, who proposed in 1964 or 1965 to write for me (I was then editing *Nugget* magazine) an article called "The New Journalism," which would examine the innovations then being made in the conven-

tional news story by Jimmy Breslin and Tom Wolfe (newly in town from the *Washington Post*) in the wide-open New York *Herald Tribune*, and by Gay Talese on the *Times*, among others.

The article never came to pass, but the phrase stuck, and was used by Hamill and everyone on *Nugget* who had been turned on by the light-bulb concept of unifying in one piece all the fresh excitement that had suddenly touched daily journalism in New York.

SEYMOUR KRIM
New York, N.Y.

SIR: James Conaway ("Looking at Reagan," October *Atlantic*) finds Reagan's version of his association with the American Veteran's Committee "too pat," and concludes that Reagan's AVC experience resulted in "a complicated personal evolution that profoundly affected his view of himself and the world." But Reagan did not "organize the Hollywood chapter of AVC." It and a few other AVC chapters in California were organized by communists and fellow travelers, who used political innocents to front for them, and regarded Reagan's distinctive oratory abilities as a useful means for building a strong organization of liberal but noncommunist members. In this context Reagan should not be faulted for his liberalism, which Conaway surmises to have been a post-adolescent optimism, for that tendency prevailed in many veterans of liberal or moderate political persuasion.

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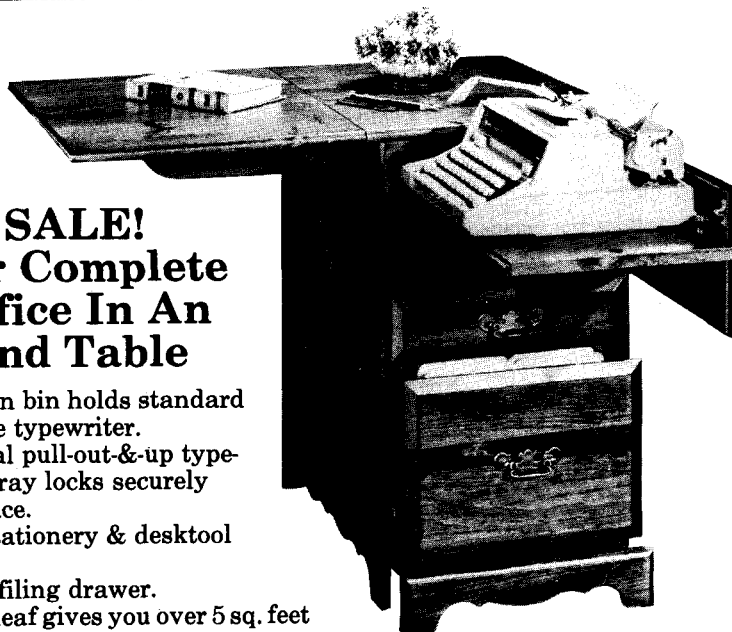
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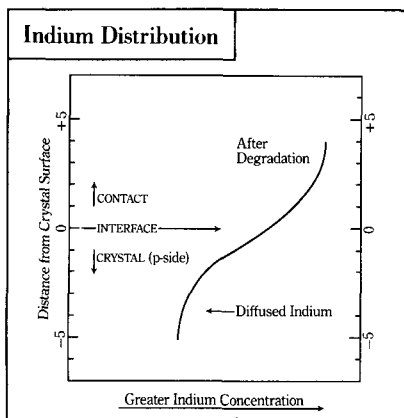
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The Strategic Misalignment

The Strategic Misalignment

Tunable semiconductor lasers can now measure specific gases in automotive exhaust with 25-millisecond response time. A successful strategy for improving laser reliability developed at the General Motors Research Laboratories makes this and other new spectroscopy capabilities practical realities.



Electron microprobe analysis of a crystal-contact interface, indicating indium penetration into the PbSnTe crystal.

Diagram of hypothetical indium diffusion paths for a three-layer contact structure of Au-Pd-Au.

THE ACHIEVEMENT of long lifetime and frequency stability makes the lead-tin-telluride diode laser a practical infrared spectrometer. Earlier innovations brought to this laser the characteristics of increased power, higher temperature operation, greater efficiency and wider tuning range.

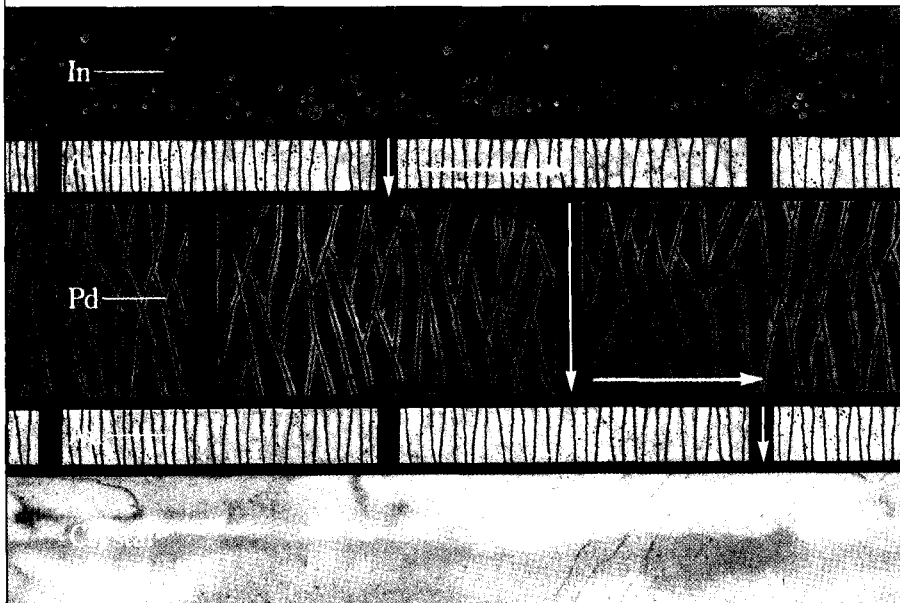
Operating in the 5- to 10-micron range, the PbSnTe laser spectrometer can resolve the time-dependent emission of carbon monoxide, sulfuric acid vapor, methane and other species of interest in automotive exhaust. This permits measurement of transients in carbon monoxide to carbon dioxide gas conversion in a

catalytic converter. This capability represents a significant advance over conventional spectroscopy instrumentation. The laser is also being tested by NASA for use in detecting the molecular species involved in chemical reactions in the stratosphere.

New knowledge of the process by which laser reliability is compromised has been revealed in fundamental studies conducted by Dr. Wayne Lo and his colleagues at General Motors. Dr. Lo's investigations have demonstrated that laser lifetime and stability are limited by the development of excessive electrical contact resistance. He has been able to stop increases in resistance by devising a multilayer ohmic contact consisting of different metal films. This configuration has extended laser operating lifetime to more than 1,000 hours and increased shelf-life to an estimated 25 years.

Slow degradation due to a gradual increase in contact resistance was observed in idle lasers stored at room temperature, but not in lasers maintained at a maximum temperature of 77 K, despite several hundred hours of continuous operation. These results suggested the temperature-dependent process of diffusion.

Degradation occurred primarily on the p-type side of the laser, where the contact consisted of a thin layer of gold followed by a



layer of indium. Electron microprobe analyses revealed that indium, a semiconductor donor, was diffusing through the gold layer into the crystal, apparently causing a reduction in hole carrier concentration near the p-surface. This effect was counteracted to a great degree by sandwiching a thin layer of platinum between the layers of indium and gold. Laser reliability reached a full year.

When degradation was still observed, although to a reduced extent, Dr. Lo advanced the hypothesis that diffusion and transport were taking place along grain boundaries in the polycrystalline contact layers. He proposed replacing the Pt-Au barrier with a three-layer structure. Since palladium film structures have fewer grain boundaries than those of platinum, providing fewer leakage paths for the indium, Pd was tested in place of Pt.

DIODE LASERS composed of $\text{Pb}_{0.86}\text{Sn}_{0.14}\text{Te}$ and fabricated with a variety of contacts were maintained at 60°C in order to accelerate aging, with periodic interruptions for testing. The results showed that a multilayer structure of In-Au-Pd-Au, in which the grain boundaries tend to be misaligned, provides maximal reduction of indium penetration, confirming Dr. Lo's hypothesis.

The misaligned boundaries force diffusion to take place laterally, which slows transport into the crystal. The additional layer slows the process even further.

Solving the contact problem represents the culmination of efforts that began at General Motors with the development of an "ingot-nucleation" vapor transport method for growing crystals. The resulting crystals are of high purity, with a dislocation density of less than 1000 cm^{-2} . Lasers made from these crystals incorporate a low temperature cadmium-diffused p-n junction. This process, invented by Dr. Lo, increases the laser's output to five milliwatts.

A tuning range of 500 cm^{-1} and pulsed operating temperatures of up to 140 K are achieved by a two-step annealing process. This technique induces a graded carrier concentration that increases infrared light confinement in the laser structure, thus reducing losses and increasing output.

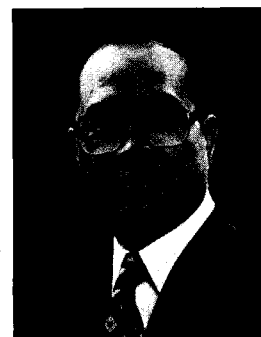
"These innovations," says Dr. Lo, "combine to produce a laser that allows us to make measurements previously impossible."

THE MAN BEHIND THE WORK

Dr. Wayne Lo is a Senior Research Scientist in the Physics Department at the General Motors Research Laboratories.

Dr. Lo was born in Hupei, China. He did his undergraduate work at Cheng-Kung University in Taiwan. He received an M.S. from the University of Rhode Island and a Ph. D. in electrical engineering from Columbia University in 1972. His doctoral thesis concerned the characterization of deep-level states and carrier lifetimes in gallium arsenide light-emitting diodes.

Before undertaking graduate studies, Dr. Lo was instrumental in setting up the first American transistor production plant in Taiwan. In 1973, he joined General Motors, where he is currently in charge of semiconductor laser and spectroscopy research.



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FOR SALE: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

by Charles Rembar

Over the past twenty years the Supreme Court has made admirable advances in ensuring freedom of speech, but has the court now gone too far? Recent rulings, favoring advertisers and political fund-raisers, award First Amendment protection to those with the money to pay for it.

There is a notion rife, and virtually unquestioned, that every time a case is won by the side that cites the First Amendment, we have made a gain for First Amendment freedoms. It is not so. First Amendment freedoms, civil libertarians customarily lament, are in peril. This time they are right, but not for the reasons they give. In fact, those who most often cite the amendment provide a good part of the peril. They fatten the First Amendment and render it injury-prone.

For a century and a half in our nation's history, the First Amendment was scarcely heard of. Now it seems to be in the papers every day—government secrets, reporters' sources, school libraries, obscenity, access to courtrooms, the defense of private suits for libel. The absence of litigation involving the amendment in former times did not mean there was greater freedom of speech and press than there is now; it meant only that the scope of the amendment in the general understanding—judicial as well as popular—was narrower then, that it was thought to apply only to the federal govern-

ment, not to the states, and only to the expression of political opinion. Moreover, with the exception of the ill-begotten (and short-lived) Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, and until the Red Scare suppression that began with World War I and declined at the end of the 1950s, there was indeed freedom to express political opinion. Even during the Civil War, when other provisions of the Bill of Rights were trampled on, savage criticism of the government abounded. But that was the only province of the First Amendment: unhampered comment on the government. Most people didn't think freedom of speech meant anything more than that.

In fact, it does. Intellectual freedom, even when not directly political, is an inseparable part of what the First Amendment seeks to protect. Art and science, freely pursued, can become dangerous to the sovereign. This is obvious today: the Soviet Union has made it clear. Nor was it unknown to the Americans whose rebellion led to the Constitution. In 1774, the Continental Congress addressed a letter to the inhabitants of Quebec. In it, the Congress said: "The importance of [freedom of the press] consists, *besides the advancement of truth, science, morality, and the arts in general*, in its diffusion of liberal sentiments on the administration of government. . . ." (The emphasis, of course, is added.) The reaches of the First Amendment explored in the literary censorship cases of the 1960s had not been wholly *terra incognita*.

During the time that writers were freed from the hobbles of obscenity laws, it became apparent that private lawsuits could interfere with First Amendment

freedoms. The financial burden of being sued—not only the judgment that one might have to pay but also the cost of defense—inhibits free expression, and so the Supreme Court rewrote the law of libel. The Court did not abolish libel, but, by bringing the First Amendment to bear, it made things much more difficult for plaintiffs, even those unquestionably traduced. The fact that there is still a great deal of libel litigation does not mean that the press is hampered more now than formerly. On the contrary, it publishes much that once it would not have dared to. The press quite naturally goes to the edge of legal limits, and there it enters the area of litigation.

Later it became clear that the purposes of the First Amendment could not be served merely by invalidating restraints on expression. The liberty to voice opinion was the main objective of the First Amendment at its inception, but our society has grown so large and complicated that the facts on which opinion can sensibly be based are not usually at hand. Freedom to talk means little to the polity if things that need talking about are not known. In 1789, society was relatively simple and the facts were fairly plain. Now the facts are multifarious and recondite, and often hard to come by. The press must be free not merely to express opinion but also to obtain information. Hence access to information has become a part of First Amendment freedoms.

One aspect of this extension of the First Amendment beyond simple liberty of expression is seen in the impulse to create a “reporter’s privilege”—a right, in certain circumstances, to keep the identity of informants confidential, so that sources of information will not run dry. Another has to do with the operation of the courts themselves. In certain circumstances, free press has outwrestled fair trial, and courtrooms have been opened to reporters in situations where, for the protection of the defendant, they would formerly have been closed. Among the safeguards that the Sixth Amendment provides for the criminally accused is the right to a “public trial”: an American reaction to royal prosecutions, a defense against secret condemnation. In these recent cases, however, the accused has *wanted* certain proceedings kept from the public, on the ground that publicity might prejudice the jury. He is denied secrecy on the countervailing ground that the press ought to be able to keep the public informed about what goes on in our courts. This involves acceptance of the idea that uninhibited comment alone is not enough; the First Amendment must include a right to

gather the facts on which comment may be made. Its justification, of course, is not the welfare of journalists, though the declamations we are exposed to sometimes make it seem so. Further, the justification is not the reporter’s right to ply his trade; it is the public’s need to know.

These are remarkable advances, remarkably swift and remarkably good. But freedom of speech is, for most of us, an abstraction. We do not want to hear the offensive or the obnoxious. Only with considerable intellectualization, and an effort of will, do we accept the proposition that evil persons should be allowed to utter their evil thoughts. For most of us, freedom of speech means freedom for me. Except among a small minority, the First Amendment has a fragile emotional basis.

It was with this in mind that, in the literary censorship cases of the 1960s, in which restraints on writing were lifted, the defense sought to avoid trial by jury. At the time most people, though they might want to read *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, *Tropic of Cancer*, and *Fanny Hill*, did not want to see them openly published. The decisions represented a judicial application of a legal abstraction against the will of a majority. (It was a transient majority; popular opinion soon followed the courts’ lead. We hear the converse more frequently: the courts, as Mr. Dooley said, listen to the results of the last election. It is also true, however, that the populace listens to the courts. The pace and nature of changing attitudes toward race, for instance, would not have been the same if the integration decisions had gone the other way.)

That constitutional advance—the end of literary censorship—has been accepted. So, to a considerable degree (not fully), have the others I have mentioned. But if the movement is carried too far, we can count on popular revolt and judicial retrogression. By “too far,” I do not mean extent alone; there is still plenty of room for enlargement of the First Amendment. I mean indirection, extension unrelated to the amendment’s central values.

Here is a small example, itself not too important, but symptomatic of First Amendment abuse: the courts have decided—the Supreme Court rather reluctantly, other courts with more enthusiasm—that topless dancing in barrooms presents a First Amendment question. Even the most libertarian of our justices, Hugo Black and William Douglas, insisted on a distinction between expression and conduct. The regulation of conduct is the essential business of government. In situations that partake of both (“action brigaded with expression,” in Justice Douglas’s words), if conduct predominates, the government can exercise control. The First Amend-

Charles Rembar, a New York attorney who helped to win landmark decisions against censorship in the 1960s, is the author of *The End of Obscenity, Perspective*, and the recent *The Law of the Land*.

ment, these justices told us, does not stand in the way. Some things are pure expression: the printed word is the prime example. But there is no conduct that does not contain some element of expression. Consider the poor soul who compulsively exposes himself, the flasher. It cannot be denied that he is trying to communicate. Yet no one would argue that the First Amendment prohibits the state from making his conduct illegal.

Perhaps I should not say “no one”; some First Amendment doctrinaires might make that argument. Let me give an unarguable example: there is probably no action more expressive than murder. The murderer is surely saying something.

Maybe barroom topless dancing should be prohibited, maybe not. We are concerned here not with desirability but with the First Amendment. To rule that writhing is a form of speech draws the amendment close to ridicule, and ridicule is not healthy for First Amendment freedoms.

I do not argue for a literal reading of the First Amendment. Paradoxically, those who would take it in a wrong direction very often do. They are simultaneously loose and strict constructionists. In the latter role they are adherents of the “absolute” theory of the First Amendment. Justice Black, founding father of the theory, felt First Amendment problems were easily solved: just read the Constitution, read it literally. “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press. . . .” “No law,” said the justice, means “no law.” Hence questions of degree need not be reached. Justice Douglas joined Black in this approach. All anti-obscenity statutes are void. They are laws abridging the freedom of the press.

This is a marvelously seductive theory, a simple, what’s-the-problem approach. It enables us to skate gracefully around all the vexing questions. When one listens to an adherent, one almost hears a sigh of relief. (An incidental benefit for Justice Black was that it relieved him of the task, plainly distasteful to him, of looking at the sleazy materials that often form the subject matter of obscenity cases.)

But if we seek to base a First Amendment theory on a literal reading of the Constitution, we instantly encounter difficulties. The press, literally, is the printing press and its product. Yet Black and Douglas applied their theory to motion pictures. And what does “abridging” mean? Is restriction that does not amount to complete suppression included in the prohibition? What about statutes that attempt to safeguard children? Nobody challenges the Supreme Court’s statement that publication of the dates of wartime troopship

sailings may be properly restrained, or that the speech involved in fraud may be sued upon.

The amendment mentions only laws enacted by Congress. How about orders issued by the President, in the interests (he says) of national security? Some, of course, have been legitimate; some, we know, have not. Are all of them beyond the reach of First Amendment

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guarantees? Again, most First Amendment cases of recent years have dealt with the actions of states—state anti-obscenity statutes, libel actions brought under state law, state prosecutors seeking sources of information. This came about through judicial glosses on the Fourteenth Amendment, which says that no state shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property “without due process of law.” In the twentieth century the Supreme Court decided that the Fourteenth Amendment, enacted after the Civil War, incorporated most of the Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment. But the Fourteenth Amendment says not a word about freedom of speech and press. I will not go into the reasoning that led to the conclusion that the First Amendment inhibits the actions of states; I believe the conclusion is correct. But it requires the very opposite of a literal reading. “Due process,” literally, has to do with procedure, not with substantive rights.

So the First Amendment would provide only meager protection if it were given a literal reading—none at all against the Executive or state governments, and much less than we would like against acts of Congress. We are left with the arduous task of deciding how far beyond their primary meanings “speech” and “press” may go, and to what end. In making these decisions, we must keep in mind the dangers of conceptual inflation. Is the particular broad interpretation one that furthers the underlying objectives of the First Amendment (as in the access-to-information cases)? Or is it one that has little relation to those objectives, and attenuates the First Amendment? Or—a different danger to the First Amendment, but related—is it one that may appear to enlarge the meaning of free expression, but in fact constricts it?

In the past decade First Amendment decisions have been made that are ostensibly liberal but, in my opinion, work against the grand purposes of the amendment, in the two ways mentioned: they have

the effect of making the amendment seem paltry, and they muffle the voices of most of us by amplifying the voices of those who have more money.

Back in 1942, the Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment does not extend to “commercial speech.” The Court, unanimous, held that advertising goods and services for sale was not the sort of communication the drafters of the First Amendment had in mind.

The ruling was too broad. Some kinds of advertising are entitled to the protection of the amendment; plainly, the political advertisement is. When people who seek to advance a point of view don’t own a newspaper or television station, they have to pay for space or time. Beyond that, some commercial advertising is informative, and hence entitled to a measure of protection: prices of generic drugs, for instance. The Court gradually departed from the 1942 decision, but the overruling of the ruling is itself too broad. In effect, hucksterism is elevated to the high place that “free speech” and “free press” occupied in the minds of those who enacted the Bill of Rights. Very little advertising consists of protest against oppression or political chicanery, or addresses any sort of public issue, or works toward “the advancement of truth, science, morality, and the arts in general.” It is directed simply to making money for the advertiser, more or less honestly. While some of this may have incidental social benefit, it cannot sensibly be thought entitled to anything like the degree of immunity to government regulation that noncommercial speech is given. “The business of America,” said Calvin Coolidge, “is business.” The Supreme Court seems to be telling us that the business of the First Amendment—at least part of its business—is business. Moneymaking, of course, is not to be condemned in a profit-fueled economy, but there are other provisions of the Constitution that protect free enterprise. Commercial puffery hardly seems the sort of thing for which the First Amendment was designed.

It can be said that money is almost always involved in First Amendment cases. Books and newspapers would not be published—not many of them would, at any rate—if money could not be made from their publication. The fact that profit is a motive does not make the protection of the First Amendment disappear.

But there is an important difference. It is in the product. The motive may be the same, but there is a critical distinction between selling ideas (in the broadest sense, including artistic expression) and selling goods and services. In each instance, the seller is in business, is getting money for his product, but if the product itself is speech or press, the First Amendment is unquestionably involved. The question is not an-

swered by saying that speech or press is employed in the selling; we must also ask whether it is speech or press that is being sold.¹

Bringing commercial hawking within the fold of the First Amendment has resulted in rulings that can fairly be called bizarre. Last June the Supreme Court handed down decisions in two cases involving power companies. In each, the Court nullified efforts of the New York State Public Service Commission to act in the public interest.

One case involved a commission order that the Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation cease promoting consumption of electricity: a desirable measure, one would think, when the nation is held hostage to imported oil. If the justices considered the order an infringement of the company’s right to enhance its profits, they might have put their decision on that shaky ground. But this the Court was apparently unwilling to do; instead, it found a violation of the First Amendment. A decision against the power company would not have silenced its executives. As individuals, they would have the same access to public forums as those in opposition. It is plain, however, that what was involved was not a stand on a public issue but the naked effort to sell a product. The Court was elevating simple moneymaking to the constitutional level of political comment and artistic expression.

Two oddities may be noted. One, pointed out by Justice William Rehnquist, the lone dissenter, is that what we have here is not only business but monopoly business. The state creates the monopoly; one would think the state should have some supervision over what the monopoly does with revenues that, under its franchise, are really a tax on the citizens. The other oddity is that this single dissent came from Justice Rehnquist, whose appointment to the bench was viewed with such dismay by liberals. Just as the majority sounded like the reactionary justices in the anti-welfare cases three quarters of a century ago, so Rehnquist sounded like the liberal justices who thirty years later overruled that judicial arrogation.

The other case, decided the same day, involved material less obviously commercial, more a matter of public controversy. The power company, Consolidated Edison, included in the envelopes in which it sent its bills an insert arguing for nuclear power. Although here the company was dealing with a real issue and not with whether electricity should be squandered rather

¹When the *Fanny Hill* case was argued before the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, one judge asked why a long-established and respected house such as G. P. Putnam’s would publish such a book. “To make money,” I answered. On this aspect of the case the court seemed satisfied that the First Amendment nevertheless applied.

Bringing commercial hawking within the fold of the First Amendment has resulted in rulings that are bizarre.

than conserved, the goal was the same: more profit for the company. The commission told Consolidated Edison to stop. The Supreme Court, relying only on the First Amendment, told the commission to stop telling Consolidated Edison to stop. This time there were two dissenters, Justice Harry Blackmun, who wrote the dissenting opinion, and Justice Rehnquist, who joined in most of it. The liberal part of the bench favored the power company.

The bitter cream of the jest is that the audience, without any say in the matter, is paying for the privilege of being subjected to the commercial message. A utility's rates are determined by the standard of fair return on investment. "Return" is what is left after expenses are deducted from income. The cost of advertising is an expense; so is the cost of mailing.

The decision that made money talk the loudest, however, and the most perniciously, had to do with election spending. It came in 1976, the result of an attack on the Federal Election Campaign Act. The Court decided that Congress might control certain kinds of *contributions* to campaigns, but could not control *spending* on campaigns. When money is obtained in ways unaffected by the limitations of the statute—and there is plenty of room to operate outside those limitations—nothing can be done, the Supreme Court held, about how much money will be spent. Congress had sought to impose three kinds of spending ceilings: (1) on personal expenditures by the candidates themselves, (2) on overall expenditures on behalf of candidates and under the candidate's control, and (3) on expenditures advancing the candidate's campaign by individuals or groups not directly associated with the candidate. Although there were some other issues in the case, the main issue was the First Amendment. The Supreme Court held, in essence, that spending money is a form of speech.

The identity of the litigants is a comment on the inadequacy of those deteriorating concepts "liberal" and "conservative." Senator James Buckley, proudly conservative, was among those who challenged the legislation. So was Stewart Mott, angel of liberal causes. Senator Eugene McCarthy joined in the assault. (It is hard to think of other issues on which he and Senator

Buckley agreed, at least prior to McCarthy's endorsement of Ronald Reagan.) On the same side was the American Civil Liberties Union, striking a blow against the First Amendment (not consciously, of course). It found itself holding hands with the Conservative Party of New York.

It was a *per curiam* opinion, meaning an unsigned opinion that a majority of the Court has agreed upon. According to Woodward and Armstrong's *The Brethren*, Justice Potter Stewart wrote the principal parts of the opinion, the parts with which we are concerned. (The Court upheld the reporting and disclosure sections of the legislation and the provisions for partial government financing of presidential campaigns.)

Stewart is a highly intelligent and very interesting judge. Roughly, he is an economic conservative and a First Amendment liberal. In the obscenity cases, once he had abandoned his dandy automatic formula of I-don't-know-what-it-is-but-I-know-it-when-I-see-it, he subscribed to the "social value" test that liberated *Fanny Hill*. His economic set, however, comes out in his general view of the First Amendment. He gave a talk at Yale some years ago in which he said that "the press"—the communications business—was intended by the drafters of the First Amendment to be a fourth arm of government, along with Congress, the executive branch, and the judiciary. "Speech" and "press," said Justice Stewart, were meant to cover quite different things, and the media are to have privileges unavailable to the ordinary citizen. The term "fourth estate" takes on a new meaning in the Stewart view of government. It was natural for a judge with this combination of inclinations (a) to respond affirmatively to the invocation of the First Amendment where the media are concerned, and (b) to disfavor restrictions on how people spend their money. The justices who joined him in the election-spending decision, however, did not have so neat a philosophical basis for their decisions.²

²There is no historical evidence that the drafters of the Bill of Rights were making any such distinction between "speech" and "press," and the principal argument urged in its favor is, in Justice Stewart's words, "If the Free Press guarantee meant no more than freedom of expression, it would be a constitutional redundancy." But there is no redundancy. At the time the Bill of Rights was drafted, there were two means of communicating with the public: talking (at town meetings, in churches, at conventions, in legislative bodies) and writing (and having what you wrote printed in broadsides, newspapers, pamphlets, books). In England the Crown had limited free speech with horrible punishments, and had controlled the press both with those punishments and by the licensing of printing (the latter being "prior restraint" or "censorship" in its narrowest sense). It was natural, and factually as well as theoretically proper, for the drafters to mention both speech and press without giving one a substantially greater freedom than the other. They meant to guarantee liberty of expression, whether through talk or through writing. "Free speech" alone did not cover the field; neither did "free press." If the drafters intended what Justice Stewart says they did—to give the commercial press more liberty of expression than the private citizen and to grant it governmental status—they could have said so in a few words.

Eight justices participated; Justice John Stevens did not sit. There was a five-to-three vote favoring the ceilings on contributions. As to spending, seven justices took the position that the First Amendment was violated by the ceilings on expenditures by individuals and groups and by the ceilings on overall expenditures on behalf of candidates. Six took the position that the ceilings on expenditures by the candidates themselves also violated the First Amendment. Chief Justice Warren Burger thought the whole legislative system was unconstitutional, including the provisions for disclosure of contributions and expenditures and the provisions for government financing. Justice Thurgood Marshall thought the limit on personal expenditures was valid. Justice Byron White, usually an economic liberal and a law-and-order conservative, was the only one of the eight who thought that all the limits on expenditures were valid.

The issue was treated, both by the majority and by the two dissenters, as one in which First Amendment values were arrayed against the public's interest in preventing corruption. All sides agreed that money is now a tremendous factor in elections. The limits on contributions were upheld by a majority because of the obvious connection between contributions and the promotion of a friendly attitude (if not less subtle crookedness) on the part of successful candidates. The limits on expenditures were struck down because a larger majority felt there is less direct connection with corruption here, and that since spending money is the means by which candidates communicate with the voters, the First Amendment stands in the way. Justice White disagreed with the majority on the ground that limits on expenditures reduce the need of candidates for money and so make them less vulnerable to the corruptive influence of the money-givers, and he argued that this outweighed the First Amendment objection.

(The emphasis on bribery in part reflected the fact that the legislation in question was enacted in response to Watergate; it also reflected the fact that the legislation was the latest in a series of congressional efforts, beginning in the 1890s, to clean up elections, most of them called "Corrupt Practices Acts." Although at their inception they were part of the protest against big business, and the primary target was contributions by corporations, labor unions were involved in cases that came to the Court in the 1940s.)

Keeping our elected officials honest is, of course, a worthy aim, and I agree with Justice White that the purity of the electoral process (or rather the effort to make it less impure) outweighs such encumbrances on free expression as the legislation might be thought to entail. But I would go further. I believe that the legislation puts no encumbrance on free expression. On the

contrary, the legislation furthers free expression. Moreover, it brings us closer to what almost everybody now concedes is our political ideal—democracy.

The United States began with a mixture of democracy and plutocracy, and it is with us still. On the date our Constitution was adopted, in most states a man had to own a certain amount of property in order to vote and a greater amount of property in order to hold office. Other states had a substantial poll tax. In only one—Vermont—were all adult males entitled to vote. Not until well into the nineteenth century did "manhood suffrage" become the rule rather than the excep-

 **The more money a candidate can spend, the more likely he is to get elected.**

tion. It took constitutional amendments to extend suffrage to black men and, considerably later, to women, black or white.

That eventually every adult became entitled to vote, and that Hamiltonian conservatism suffered doctrinal defeat early in the nineteenth century, did not mean that the plutocratic element in our government ceased to exist. Despite a general movement in the direction of democracy, a disproportionate amount of political power continues to be held by those who have wealth to use (whether they are wealthy individuals or the managers of corporate wealth). Money has remained important in elections and in the resolution of public issues, and in recent years, as the techniques of commercial advertising have been turned to political ends, its importance has become greater than ever. The more money the candidate can spend, the more likely he is to get elected. Other things are of course involved, but other things being equal, the candidate with the most television time will be the winner.

It is unrealistic to suppose that we buy our beer and toothpaste freely. It can be said we choose freely only in a narrow sense, limited by the financial ability of sellers to pound away at our perceptions. Contemporary politics is not much different. Voting, of course, has always been affected by things other than our real interests and the merits of the candidates—by their personalities, our biases, the accidents of politics. But the effort of the law should always be to help the voter reach the merits—to approach, though it cannot fully attain, a condition in which the citizen exercises an independent judgment based only on his interests and the merits of the candidates. There is nothing reprehensible in voting in furtherance of one's "selfish" interests. On the contrary, it is entirely consistent with

the democratic ideal. What is wrong, and damaging to democracy, is the use of money to make others misperceive their interests and vote in favor of yours.

Money spent on political campaigns buys votes: we must accept this if we wish to deal in reality rather than in legal fantasy. People with more money to spend cast multiple votes: their own and those of people they influence. This is hardly different from the situation that obtained in an earlier day in England, when there was no secret ballot and tenants voted under the baleful eyes of their gentry landlords. Nor is there any difference in principle between gaining disproportionate voting power by spending money and gaining it by living in a rural district, the inequity so ringingly denounced in the Supreme Court's 1964 one-person-one-vote decision. The only difference is that money-discrimination takes us even further from the democratic ideal.

So one thing wrong with the decision has to do with what most of us now take for granted: that the United States is not only a republic but a democracy (whatever the views—they were sharply divided—of those who created the nation). The other thing wrong has to do with the First Amendment.

Asserting that the “quantity of expression” varies with the amount of money spent, the Court concluded that if you cut down quantity, you abridge freedom of speech. It then decided that the interest in stemming corruption was not sufficiently well served by the expenditure limitations to justify this presumed invasion of First Amendment rights.

**If I speak through
a bullhorn while you speak
through a kazoo, you
have no freedom of speech.**

The fallacy lies in the premise—hardly examined in the opinion—that the use of wealth to amplify voices furthers freedom of speech. I suggest it does the opposite. Speech and press, in the sense in which the First Amendment uses those terms, must have an audience. The drafters of the Bill of Rights were not interested in a right to mumble. Nor is utterance to a few the equivalent of utterance to many. Degrees of audibility have to be considered. First Amendment freedoms are defeated when one of two conflicting arguments reaches a great many people while the other reaches few.

If, despite an utter absence of government interference, the citizenry were able to hear just one voice, there would be no freedom of speech. Suppose all newspapers and television stations were owned by a single group, and that group decided what messages—political as well as commercial—should be printed or broadcast. Obviously the First Amendment would be negated. Let's modify that somewhat, and assume not one voice exclusive of all others but one voice much more powerful than all others; or a few high-decibel voices, with everybody else just barely audible. Is that the situation the First Amendment contemplates? Does it not contemplate the opposite—a multitude of voices with a real audience for all? Does legislation that promotes equality of audience conflict with the First Amendment? Is it not in harmony with what the drafters had in mind?

If you and I are opponents, and I speak through a bullhorn while you speak through a kazoo, you have no freedom of speech. The principle applies all up and down the scale: little audience, little liberty; large audience, large liberty. The question is whether candidates should spend approximately equal amounts on communication. If one of them has considerably more to spend, the First Amendment is not working.

The Court's premises were (1) the more money, the more communication—true—and (2) the more communication by those who have the money to spend, the better the purposes of the First Amendment are served—false. The second premise disregards the importance of equality of opportunity to communicate. The greater the amount of information we get, the better off we are, but only if it represents with some degree of fairness the various points of view.

First Amendment cases have two refrains. One is “free, open, robust debate.” The other is “the free marketplace of ideas.” (Like all refrains, they have occasional variations.) The latter is generally attributed to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who actually said, “. . . free trade in ideas . . . the competition of the market.” Sometimes it is given an earlier provenance, in a statement by Thomas Jefferson. In any event, it has achieved the status of litany—repeated, holy, and unquestioned. It is perhaps time to question it, or at least to ask just what it means.

It conjures up pleasant scenes: a country fair with a number of booths competing equally for custom; or Main Street, with a string of shops on either side; or a farmers' market where one may wander and compare the prices and the produce. The images bear no relation to reality.

Both phrases use the word “free.” The Court does not hear the pun. The offering of ideas is free, debating

them is free, only in the sense that, under the First Amendment, the government will not interfere. Neither is free in the sense of gratis. The license to sell ideas costs money. The equal opportunity that the slogans suggest does not exist.

To a substantial extent, this is embedded fact, not a failure of the law, and it cannot be completely overcome. But if a free market of ideas is the ideal, the law should try to diminish the cost. Instead, the decisions we have been considering increase the cost. They take us further from, not closer to, the goals of the First Amendment.

I do not suggest that there ever was a golden age of freely competing ideas. Even in 1789, someone who owned a printing press had an advantage over someone who didn't. At that date, however, a printing press did not require a great accumulation of capital. Piles of money did not lie athwart the channels of communication. In relation to the population when our Bill of

Rights was drafted, there were many printing presses, many pulpits, many town meetings—no one or few of which could monopolize the market.

"Market" was meant by Holmes as metaphor only. The present Court is taking it literally. We are more or less committed to a capitalistic system in our economy. But this does not mean that the use of capital should determine First Amendment rights. A literal marketplace of ideas, anarchic except for the iron rule of money, contradicts the First Amendment. If all the stalls are occupied by the few merchants rich enough to rent them, we cannot have the free and multifarious offerings that the metaphor suggests. We have, instead, a few super-supermarkets, and here and there a lonely peddler who cannot possibly compete.

Let us not, by faddish extensions of meaning, make First Amendment guarantees seem silly. Let us not get free private enterprise confused with free expression. □

THE SEA LILY

by Jay Parini

"All language is fossil poetry."

—Emerson

I found it on a culm bank near Old Forge:
the fossil of an ancient crawler
printed firmly in a slab of coal.
I took it home, the image of its delicate,
horned shell and pincer-claws.

That summer in my bedroom, late one night,
I woke: a green moon eerily aflame
had caught the fossil in its funnel-light.
The creature glowed, its eyes staining the dark
like globed fruit swaying on their stems.

Last night I saw it shining in a dream,
the cilia on fire. Unnerved, I fossicked
in a book to find its name,
a miner in the word-bank, digger
in the tongue's lost, gleaming quarry.

**Some say the answer
is oil exploration.
Some say the answer
is conservation.
For once, everybody
is right.**

It is exploration. It is conservation. It is alternate energy sources. And it's more.

We've also got to realize that our economic growth doesn't have to be linked with excessive energy use. And with waste.

Without question, we must find more oil.

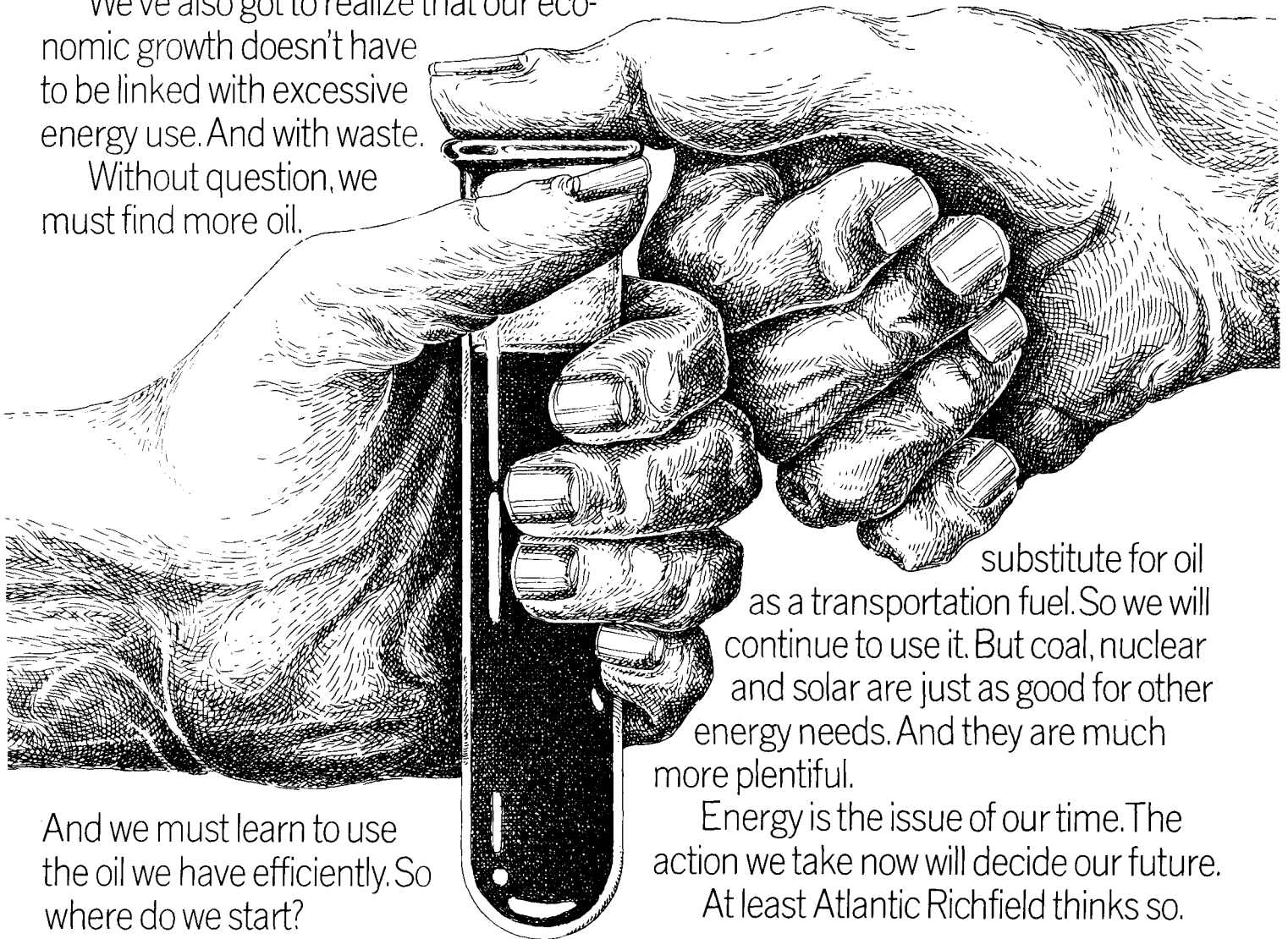
cost billions. But the money is available.

Even so, the most forceful domestic program won't be enough to meet the coming demand.

Nobody uses as much oil as America. Oil provides half of our energy needs. And half of that goes into transportation.

Smaller cars help. So do mileage standards. And we're getting there. But we still have a long way to go.

Right now, there's no economical



And we must learn to use the oil we have efficiently. So where do we start?

Scientists say there are billions of barrels of oil still undiscovered in the United States. We have the technology to find it.

Exploration and development will

substitute for oil as a transportation fuel. So we will continue to use it. But coal, nuclear and solar are just as good for other energy needs. And they are much more plentiful.

Energy is the issue of our time. The action we take now will decide our future. At least Atlantic Richfield thinks so.

There are no easy answers.

ARCO



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REPENTING AT LEISURE IN THE 1950s

by A. Alvarez

However bad a marriage may be, it is based on a kind of loyalty, to one's choice as much as to one's partner. Once that fundamental loyalty collapses beyond repair, the marriage becomes merely a flag of convenience. And divorce, for all the blind waste involved, may become the only saving option.

"Love is unjust, justice loveless."—Delmore Schwartz

Something was wrong and I already knew it on the first morning when I went downstairs to make a cup of tea while my young wife slept on. The wedding night had not been a success. Which should not have come as a surprise, since none of the pre-wedding nights had been successful, nor had the afternoons. Moreover, we had had too few of them. We had met only seven weeks before and had married in a kind of dream. It seemed to be the thing to do in the 1950s, particularly for a literary young man who had read too much Lawrence and Leavis. I had this terrible lust for premature maturity, this irresponsible desire for responsibility, before I had any idea of what maturity involved or had even tasted the pleasures of youthful irresponsibility.

I was twenty-seven, but young for my age, having hardly been outside the academy: boarding school, Oxford, research in England and America, university teaching. A narrow and opinionated life, led mostly at second hand, through books. As for my wife, she was just young: we married on her twentieth birthday. I suspect that all she really wanted to do was get away from home and her stormy father, a bull of a man with a fighter's pouting underlip and eyes like those of a prophet from the north, bright blue and fierce. She and her fragile mother thought of themselves as victims in the same cause, and perhaps they had been when the girl was too young to defend herself. But at heart she was her father's child although against him she must have known she could not win.

That was when I appeared on the scene, already half in love with her mother and extraordinary grandmother, whom I had met in America, and besotted with the idea of marriage. So finding her seemed like a marvelous piece of luck: a tall, headlong girl with brown hair over her shoulders and wide green eyes, which seemed to contain endless depths of feeling. Maybe they did, but not for me. So far as I was concerned, she saw only her resentments. Which were obscure but many.

I was too naive to notice this, even though I was warned by the man best qualified to tell me. When I announced we were going to get married, her father grinned at me like a naughty schoolboy who realizes he is being let off. "Rather you than me," he said.

All her mother said was, "Isn't it a bit sudden?"

But when we pooh-poohed her caution, she shrugged and didn't bother to argue. Like her husband, she knew how it would turn out before it had even started.

With us, it took a little longer. First we had to go through the ceremony at the registry office, the afternoon party for the family, the drunken brawl for friends in the evening, the wedding night, the first unhappy sleep, then the first and even unhappier experience of waking up with someone who is still an utter stranger. Although we had had no revelations before the marriage, I suppose I expected the sex to be all right on the night, like amateur dramatics. It wasn't, and without anything being said, it seemed somehow certain that it never would be.

Now this unknown girl whom I had absurdly married slept on, her mouth slightly open, her thick hair spread across the pillow. The early winter sunlight flooded in. Outside, the last leaves hung in the still air. I watched her as I pulled on my dressing gown, but she did not stir. Then I went downstairs to make the tea.

I moved about the kitchen thinking, "What have I done?" Guiltily, as if I had committed some crime: against her, against myself, but above all against common sense. Suddenly, all the doors had banged shut around me. "For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part."

"Till death us do part." I was overwhelmed by the finality of my mistake, by its endlessness.

I set the kettle on the gas ring, put the dirty glasses in the sink, then went into the sitting room to get the stove going. It was my usual routine but now it felt different. Someone else was part of it, someone I scarcely knew and wasn't even sure I liked.

I loved her, or so I told myself. I had imagined myself into one of those grand and sudden passions that change everything. Just like my idols, Lawrence and Frieda. And she, who was also enamored of the Lawrence myth, though for different reasons, had gone along with it. That is why we had plunged so recklessly into marriage. She was going to be the Dark Goddess, Muse, Jungle Jane, to my sensitive poet. She instinct, me intellect. The Great Passion, Mark II. And we really believed it, however absurd and sad it now seems to have been once so young. What both of us were too dumb to understand was that although great passions may be possible without actually liking each other, marriages aren't.

I collected the empty bottles and carried them out to the dustbin, tidied and swept the living room, and did

the washing up. Just like Lawrence, I tried telling myself. Tidy as a sailor. But somehow it didn't seem much of a consolation.

Then I made toast and carried a breakfast tray upstairs. She was still sleeping. I put the tray down on the bed and gently shook her shoulder. She opened her eyes resentfully.

I assumed a breezy but affectionate manner that seemed appropriate for a newlywed. "Breakfast," I said. "And I've cleaned up downstairs."

She stared at me sullenly and did not reply, then levered herself slowly into a sitting position. She, too, seemed to be having trouble understanding why she was there.

I poured tea. "It's a lovely morning," I said. Her silence was making me nervous.

She bit into her toast, then put it down in disgust. Her first words that morning were, "You didn't cut off the crusts."

"Pardon?"

"The crusts. You have to cut them off to let the steam out. Otherwise the toast goes hard. You know that perfectly well."

"I don't."

"You do. Of course you do. Everybody does."

"I do now, but I didn't a minute ago."

"You did. You've done it on purpose." She stared at me with loathing. "On purpose," she repeated.

I see now that she too had waked astonished and miserable at finding herself locked up, for better or for worse, with a stranger. But at the time I was dumbfounded.

"Why should I want to do that?" I asked.

She did not reply.

I went back downstairs to eat my breakfast alone in the beautiful little studio, with the stove glowing away in one corner and the spidery Windsor chairs, which seemed to float on the blood-red linoleum.

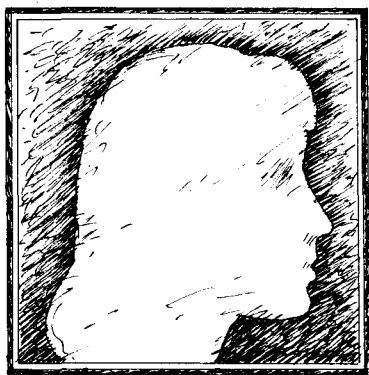
For an ambitious, literary-critical young man like myself, marriage was not just a way of settling down and legitimizing my sex life, it was something meaningful and heroic, a career, a vocation, a vindication of my values.

Not that I want to blame literature for the deformations in my character. But it did go a long way toward dignifying my yearnings and endowing my perfectly ordinary youthful sentimentality with a fine moral edge. For those of us who were brought up in the days when Leavis and Trilling kept the flame, getting married was a gesture of cultural solidarity, joining us to the Great Tradition.

My own case was complicated by an overdose of D. H. Lawrence, which I had come by in a not altogether

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er literary way. Not long before I had been helplessly in love with a German girl—pale, blonde, skinny, and very subtle—who was a few years older than I and unhappily married to a pompous but decent Englishman with a job in the cultural hierarchy. Since we were all literary beyond the call of duty or reason, she inevitably imagined herself to be a latter-day Frieda, and for a time I became her Lawrence. I had never been so in love or so miserable or so flattered. I hung around her in agonies for a whole academic year, gratefully



feeding off whatever scraps she threw me. When the long summer vacation came, she went home to Germany and I followed: to a tiny, primitive village with oxcarts in the streets and deep forest all around. Just like Frieda and Lawrence, we told each other continually and without irony. But it

didn't work out, and she returned abruptly to her husband, while I sailed, brokenhearted, to the States.

I had a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, which insisted, in the politest possible way, that I spend the first six months at Harvard. But I was uneasy there since it reminded me of Oxford: Oxford without the architecture and without the German girl. So directly my time was up I lit out for New Mexico. Because the book I was writing included—of course—a chapter on Lawrence, my official excuse was that I wanted to talk to his widow. But in truth I was still under the spell of the German girl and her potent, contagious literary imaginings. Since she had cast me in the role of Lawrence, then Lawrence I would be—in as much as that was possible for a well-brought-up, middle-class London Jew with good academic qualifications and a visiting fellowship from an unLawrentian research foundation. I would see his widow, live in a place he had loved, and play the part. I was, in short, suffering from literary infatuation expanded into the realm of dementia. I was also suffering from an equally demented misjudgment of my own abilities and my own temperament.

Frieda was away in Mexico when I arrived in Taos and by the time she returned I was already lost to the place itself. I had managed to rent a cabin that had once belonged to Dorothy Brett, Lawrence's disciple, high up on the flank of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, north of Taos and a mile or so across from the then deserted Lawrence ranch.

I had never been in a place so isolated, so peaceful, so beautiful. The woods dropped away below the cabin and beyond them was a vast blue sagebrush plain,

sliced in the distance by the gorge of the Rio Grande and rimmed by violet mountains. On this desert plain, far off, rose two or three little volcanic cones, also blue, as though from the surface of the moon. To the left, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains swept south to Taos. Occasionally, I would slog up to the top of Lobo Mountain and look down toward Taos, twenty miles away. The air was so clear that with binoculars it would have been possible, I imagined, to pick out people moving about the streets.

In that limpid, Dantesque light and silence I felt happier than ever before and hungry for work. I got up when the sun woke me, rising from behind the Lobo in the pure pale sky, washed myself in the chilly stream, then wrote for five or six hours. After lunch, I drove down to collect the mail, then wandered about the mountain or went off in my ancient car to explore the canyons and ridges up and down the range. Once a week I drove into town to shop and occasionally I spent the afternoon with a Taos sculptor whose passion was hunting. Every so often I drove the hundred miles into Santa Fe for an evening with the gifted poet Winfield Townley Scott and his wife, Elly.

But mostly I kept to myself, and as the summer went on—blazing days, clear, cold nights—I think I went a little dotty out of sheer isolation. Some evenings I would catch myself out in long and intricate conversations with my own shadow. Then I would get into the car, bump off down the dirt road, and drive into Taos to see the sculptor and his wife. But my nerve would fail before I arrived and I would finish up in one of the shabby little bars on the outskirts of town where the impoverished Spanish-American farmers drank and “Anglos” were not welcome. I would tuck myself into the darkest corner, sip a beer, and listen to the voices. It was reassuring to know that the world still contained other people, even if they were speaking a language I hardly knew in an accent I could not penetrate. Then I would drive back up the mountain to the moonlight and the silence: only the creaking of the car as it cooled and the faint breathing of the little stream. The rickety gate squeaked as I opened it, the sound of my footsteps was outrageous, the back of my neck was stiff with the sense of being watched by whatever creatures had retired into the piñon when my car's headlights climbed the hill.

Frieda's return was an anticlimax. Not only because nothing could have survived my expectations, let alone lived up to them, but also because she celebrated her homecoming by gorging herself on rum babas and dark German beer at Taos's one good restaurant, then promptly collapsed with a severe attack of diabetes. So it was a couple of weeks

before I finally met her. By then her younger daughter had arrived from England to visit her.

In style and size they were an odd couple, but affectionate with each other and close—closer even than Frieda seemed to the handsome, strutting Italian she had lived with since Lawrence's death. She herself was ironic and easygoing but frail, as though diminished by age and her recent illness. All that was left of the exuberant Wagnerian of the legend were her vivid blue-green eyes and a German accent which her many years in England and America had never managed to thin. She also laughed like a young woman, throatily and easily, and as a tribute to youthful vanity still rinsed her hair in saffron to keep it yellow. Her daughter Barby was a tall thin woman in her fifties, nervous as a horse, with quick gestures, a sensitive, rather Bloomsbury face, and a fine line of casual wit, mostly at her own expense. I fell for them both in a good-humored, filial way, and did my best not to bore them with the dogged, scholarly questions Frieda had come to dread. Not that I had many questions; I had come to drink at the fountain, not to analyze the water. I was also relieved that the heroine of the most famous literary love affair of the century was now simply a determined, vivacious old lady with a past she was proud of.

She died a couple of months later. I was back in London by then, so I telephoned Barby to say I was sorry. "Come to lunch on Sunday," she said. "My little daughter will be here."

The little daughter turned out to be nineteen years old, with dramatic good looks, Frieda's green eyes, and a gift for keeping quiet which, to someone as talkative as I was, seemed both awe-inspiring and profound. Having lived her life under the shadow of her marvelous, scandalous grandmother, she believed as fervently as I did in the myth of the great passion. We had that dream in common, and arrogance enough to think it would get us through. Common sense was a vulgar and pedestrian virtue, and we were nothing if not emotional snobs. We married seven weeks later, on her twentieth birthday. I suppose we deserved each other.

Sitting up in bed, her hair falling round her face like a nomad's tent, she peered at the offending slice of toast, then at me. Resentfully. With loathing.

"On purpose," she repeated.

"Why should I want to do that?" I asked.

But she did not reply. Then or ever. And this was one of her most powerful weapons: she could maintain a silence not just for days but for whole weeks at a stretch. We reached a point of mutual exacerbation where she would be provoked by any casual remark that seemed to carry a hidden slight, most of them so trivial that I could rarely recognize them as harm done *at the time*, let alone a fortnight later. Perhaps every

new irritation reminded her of the enormity of her original mistake in marrying me.

At first her angry silences disconcerted me; later they scared me. They were so remote from the noisy emotional scenes my parents used to stage and from my own similar habit of raging briefly, then forgetting all about it, that I was unable to cope. And that, presumably, made me seem even more dismissable than she had already decided I was. She would look out at me from under her mane of brown hair, her broad face stiff with distaste, her mouth heavy, her eyes like green stone. She made me wonder what I had done with my life, chucking it away so thoughtlessly, as a gesture. She made me wonder why I had ever been born. To make her miserable, apparently.



At first I thought we would both get over it. Everyone knew there was a "period of adjustment," when each reluctantly gave up his or her unmarried habits and made room for the other person. As the Stalinists used to say while they were liquidating the kulaks, "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs." Give it time, I thought. And I'm sure she thought so too. Secretly, we were both astonished to be so unhappy.

After three weeks of bewilderment, we went off for a belated Christmas honeymoon. In memory of Lawrence and Frieda, we chose Germany. We even stopped in Heidelberg to visit Frieda's sister Elsa, a shrewd and splendid bluestocking, then in her eighties, who had lived for years with the great sociologist Max Weber. When she asked me what I was doing, I proudly chirped up, Lawrence fashion, "Writing a novel."

She looked at me with amusement, sizing me up. "Novel-writing is a heartbreaking business." Her voice was guttural, authoritative. "And if it doesn't break your heart, it isn't any good."

I felt curiously reassured by this. Maybe all our unhappiness was going to be justified after all. But it didn't feel like that.

It felt, instead, like the unhappiness of children: endless, with no before and after. The expectations we had brought to the marriage may have been different, but for both of us they were disproportionate to a degree which was more or less inhuman. The sense of failure that followed almost instantaneously was equally disproportionate and left no room for the qualities that

might have saved us: patience, tolerance, a sense of humor.

In my innocence and emotional snobbery, I didn't even know that marriage was supposed to be about those things. I thought of it as a heroic act, as symbolic, in its literary way, as the traditional marriage of the Church with Christ. It was also a kind of professional qualification. For a mathematician to fail as a husband had no bearing on his ability as a mathematician. But a literary critic spent his time pronouncing on moral



subtleties, on sensitivity, insight, maturity. If he couldn't handle his own drab little life, what right had he to lay down the law on those values literature was supposed to embody?

Matthew Arnold had been right: literature had taken over where religion left off. As for me, I felt

like a priest who has failed his faith.

At the center of the religion was a cult every bit as hallowed as that of the Virgin: the cult of the orgasm—mutual and simultaneous. It descended to us from both Lawrence and Freud as an inner mystery, something we all aspired to, a sign of grace. Because of it we had impossible expectations of our marriage, our sex life, ourselves. We were absolutists of the orgasm before we had had enough experience to ensure even sexual competence.

Maybe everybody is, in one degree or another. Copulation is the one thing you are supposed to do perfectly from the start. No one ever tells you that it is like every other activity: whatever your natural ability, it gets better with practice. But it did not get better, and the worse it got the more our loneliness increased.

Loneliness, in fact, was the defining condition of our life together; loneliness awake and asleep, in public and in private, in bed and out. Yet our case, I know now, was in no way peculiar. The figures and reports published by the various social services that cope with marital problems indicate that a vast number of young men ejaculate prematurely or not at all, an equally vast number of young women fail to have orgasms. It seems to be a major cause of unhappiness in young marriages even now, after the so-called "sexual revolution." But in those days you couldn't say so. The social services were less conspicuous than they are now. There was nowhere to go, no one to ask.

Even if there had been, I wouldn't have known how to. The subject was unmentionable, the dirtiest of all the "dirty little secrets," and the most humiliating.

Even my wife and I never talked to each other about it. It seemed too private, too laden with guilt, too insulting. As a result, it became not only the main source of the terrible loneliness we both experienced in that marriage, but also an obsession. To such a degree that, although I thought continually about sex, I no longer associated it with enjoyment. I was simply obsessed by it. Obsessed and appalled.

So, too, was my wife: obsessed, appalled, frustrated. I imagine she also felt betrayed. Once again, a man had let her down. Like her stormy father, I didn't love her enough, though what enough would have been in the circumstances neither of us could ever have calculated. No doubt the looming shadow of her famous grandmother made the sexual farce seem even more bitter than it was. No doubt it also made her secretly afraid she might be frigid, whereas she was just inexperienced, like myself. But, as Bob Dylan used to sing, "We never did too much talking anyway." Nothing was said, and in the silence all our fears and anger turned inward and rancid. In the end, it boiled down to an undeniable fact: she didn't fancy me. Maybe this produced in her a certain amount of guilt, as well as despair, but she responded to it with a continual, muffled rage. She couldn't forgive me for her inability to find me attractive.

After we got back from Germany we borrowed a flat from a friend of a friend in Victorian North Oxford. It was there that the seething dissatisfactions erupted into the first of our many savage rows, which stopped short just at the edge of violence and then rumbled on for weeks. I no longer remember what it was about, but afterward I wrote a poem about it that reads like an elegy on a love affair that has been dead for years. We had been married for less than three months.

We continued to shift about. When the owner of the flat in Oxford returned, she lent us a cottage a few miles away, just outside a fading little country town full of lovely, decaying seventeenth- and eighteenth-century houses. The cottage was pure picture postcard: whitewashed walls, half-timbered and thatched, with genuine roses round the door and a big open fireplace in the living room. My wife made herself a German peasant dress to go with the place: lace-trimmed blouse, black velvet waistcoat, dirndl skirt. She tied her beautiful hair in long plaits and looked ravishing. We used to walk the muddy lanes into town, singing German folk songs just like Lawrence and Frieda. Once or twice we even made love in front of the log fire, hoping that the romantic atmosphere would do the trick. It didn't.

Finally, we had one of those fights that seem like the

end of the world. After it, my wife marched off to stay with a friend of her mother's, an old-style bohemian who had run heavily to seed and was addicted to rural living and organic foods years before they again became fashionable. I drove her to the station, then spent the rest of the day tramping across the downs, wondering what I had done with my life. The sun shone, the wind blew, the skylarks sang their hearts out, dipping up and down, as though balanced on jets of water. It says a lot for the degree to which I had been brainwashed that, even then, it never occurred to me that we would do better to get a divorce.

The next day I damaged my car—an ancient ex-racing MG which made a vast amount of noise but was not quite fast enough to do much harm—and my wife met up with an old boyfriend who happened to arrive at the bohemian's farm. Both of us seemed to have been sobered by these incidents. A day later she was home again and soon after that our child was conceived.

That made divorce seem even more impossible, although the marriage was no better. We dragged our unhappiness after us like some large and obtrusive pet until it became a source of considerable social embarrassment. And we led a disproportionately social life. The emptier our private world became, the more crowded we made it. While we were living in the country we trekked up to London for every trivial invitation, and when we eventually moved back to town we seemed to do nothing except give or go to parties: dinner parties, bottle parties, publishers' parties, fancy dress parties, even poets' parties. We judged the success of each inversely to the bitterness of the fight we had staged during it. In one way or another we kept on the move, knowing that if we paused for a moment and looked at each other, there would be nothing to see except misery.

"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." When I first read *Anna Karenina*, I was just taking the measure of my own unhappy marriage and was much impressed. Later I became less convinced. Perhaps Freud was nearer the truth when he said that all neuroses were "unique but similar." Everywhere I looked I saw fellow members of the club: attractive young couples trying to disguise the fact that they were tearing each other apart. They seemed to be signaling to whomever they were with, "Admire me," "Laugh with me," "Love me," as if the response of other people might convince their partners of their worth. But at heart they had no hope, so they shifted about anxiously, piling charm on charm, while the tension between them vibrated in the air almost audibly. It is called "putting on a good face." It might also be called "the continuation of marital war by other means."

The arrival of our son steadied us for a time by giving us someone else to think about. But in the end it changed the nature and seriousness of the conflict without making it any less a battle to the death. Divorce was now even more unthinkable than before, for the small creature seemed to tap in me all the reserves of tenderness that might otherwise and in better circumstances have been shared with my wife. Or perhaps it was our frozen, embattled state that deepened my feelings for the child. Either way, a baby is so defenseless and so absolute in its affection that it demands in return an equally absolute love and devotion. I found myself responding willingly and without afterthought—to my surprise, since I had never been smitten by other people's children.



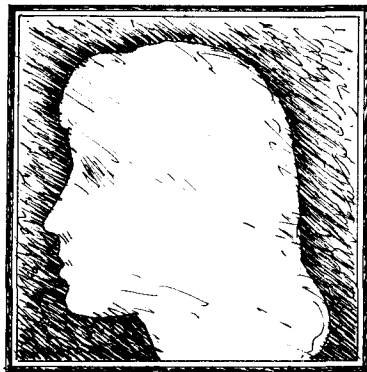
We shared the nappy changing and, after he had gone onto the bottle, the feeding. I took him for walks in his pram and later sang to him every night when he went to bed—softly, to disguise my tuneless voice—a constantly growing repertoire of gloomy folk songs, all of them about frustrated love. We grew very close and, in the end, leaving him was the hardest part of the divorce.

My wife was an excellent mother, protective and unfussy, but my devotion to the boy seemed to her faintly suspect. "He might as well have two mothers," she once said disdainfully. But by that time she was already frantic for the life that seemed to be passing her by. It was also another way of expressing her contempt for our continuing disasters in bed. Unlike me, she lost her romantic illusions fast and knew that neither love nor any of the other traditional substitutes—marriage, loyalty, duty, success, or even children—would ever make up for the dissatisfaction that was gnawing at her bones. She would have junked the whole sad business instantly if a suitable redeemer had arrived on the scene—another Lawrence, or even a Vronsky, since I was now cast in the role of Karenin-Weekley. But with this difference: she would have taken the child with her.

I knew that and so I hung on. I was also less ready than she to relinquish my romantic dreams. So I went on trying to tell myself that this was a great passion and everyone knew how rough the course of that brand of true love always runs.

Or rather, that is how I explained it to myself at the time. It seemed a specious, even dignified excuse for doing nothing. But the truth is, love had very little to do with it. Her power over me was more elementary

and harder to get away from: she got under my guard. She was the first person I had ever been involved with who took no account of what I could do, either professionally (she pretended never to read what I wrote) or in terms of the kind of person I was or might have been. Instead, she concentrated entirely on what I could *not* do sexually. And because at that time I believed so passionately in the gospel according to St. Lawrence, I had no way of answering back.



I even agreed with her. Secretly, I believed that the charmed life I had been leading was undeserved and sooner or later would have to be paid for. I was a much indulged only son, with doting parents, doting nanny, and two older sisters who, though less doting, were careful to hide their resentments. And I was precocious, an intellectual snob who had been brought up by other intellectual snobs to believe in the absolute value of intellectual snobbery. Then I found myself closeted with a young lady who behaved as if the whole thing was a worthless sham. I had been outsnobbed.

The baby was born in the States, so when summer came we drove out to my beloved New Mexico to spend time on the Kiowa Ranch in the cabin where Lawrence and Frieda had originally lived thirty years before. It was a small, run-down little shack, infested with pack rats. Bats nested over the rickety porch and hissed maliciously together when disturbed. But the seediness somehow added to the romance of the place, like the buffalo painted on the outer wall by an Indian the Lawrences had befriended. It was a pilgrimage, not a holiday, and it should have been some kind of consummation; instead, it made things worse by showing how far we had fallen short of our original ideal. All that lonely beauty and silence—the only sound was the wind moving in the huge ponderosa pine that overshadowed the house—made our emptiness more complete. We went into Taos constantly, got fighting drunk at all the parties, and immersed ourselves in the seething cauldron of gossip that kept the rich locals so obscurely happy.

After a few weeks of this we drove out to San Francisco to visit friends. More booze, more gossip, more stony silences between her and me. When the time came to return to Taos, we decided to drive south down the then beautiful coast road that twisted past Big

Sur toward Los Angeles, and cut straight across the desert to Gallup. We got as far as Ventura on the first evening, then woke late and dawdled over breakfast. So it was ten o'clock before we left and midday when we hit the Mojave Desert. The heat was like a visitation, supernatural. We trundled along in our weary old Studebaker through a shimmering, baking, fading emptiness. My wife, who didn't drive, slumped in the passenger seat, dozing or trying to read. I sweated and itched and kept an eye anxiously on the temperature gauge. Only the baby, stretched out on the back seat in his carry-cot, seemed unperturbed; he slept most of the time and woke cheerful. The hot dust sifted into the car, clogging our eyes and drying our mouths. When the furnace blast from outside became insupportable, we drove with the windows up, inhaling our own sweat and stale tobacco.

It was dark when we reached Flagstaff, where we had planned to spend the night. But when I looked at the map I realized that, if we stopped, it would be high noon again when we crossed the Painted Desert. Better to go on in the relative cool of the night than endure another day of inferno. So I drank four cups of coffee, filled the tank, then lumbered on into the huge, shadowy vacancy of the desert. My wife slept, the baby slept, I blinked, yawned, and thought about nothing.

It was ten o'clock when we drove into Gallup the following morning. I had been driving for twenty-four hours straight and had covered a thousand miles. We checked into a motel for a few hours' rest, ate, bathed the child, showered ourselves, and flopped into bed. I was beyond fatigue but vaguely pleased with myself for having spared us all the horrors of another day in the desert. It was only six hours' drive to the pinewoods and cool mountain air of the ranch.

The baby fell asleep again instantly. I rolled over toward my wife and said, "Let's make love." My efforts, I felt, deserved some gesture of thanks, and none had been forthcoming so far.

She tilted her head reluctantly in my direction and stared at me for a moment with an expression somewhere between astonishment and distaste. "Don't be ridiculous," she said, "I'm exhausted after all that driving."

"You weren't driving."

"That's not the point." She paused. "You know . . ." she began.

I waited, wondering if she was going to say thank you all the same.

" . . . you're so bloody thick at times." Then she turned her back on me and went to sleep.

Eventually, I too slept a little, but we scarcely spoke again until we reached the cabin that night. Even I seemed to have run out of things to say. The next day I had to settle down to a long, and long overdue, essay

on—of all subjects—Henry James as a travel writer. Try as I would, I was unable to connect his leisurely, regal progress round the cultures and monuments of late nineteenth-century Europe with my own sweating, sleepless grind across a thousand miles of blank desert. Although I slipped back automatically into the familiar, comforting, not quite real world of judiciousness, exquisite discrimination, and the poised, elegant put-down, my heart wasn't in it. For the first time in my life the fatigue would not go away. My hands shook, my head buzzed, my bones ached; even the marrow inside them seemed to hurt. Up until that point I had always thought, I'm young, I'm fit, I'm tough, I can take whatever she dishes out. Now I knew I was beaten. The rest was only a matter of time.

We went back to London to a new but slightly seedy flat on the shabby edge of Hampstead, and a social life like rising hysteria. "Love of one singularly, with desire to be singularly beloved, [we call] THE PASSION OF LOVE," wrote Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*. "The same, with fear that the love is not mutuall, JEALOUSIE." As the strain between us increased under the pitched roof of our attic bedroom, the jealousy grew into an obsession. She was the first to cast around—for help, or sympathy, or comfort, though it did not seem like that to me in my frenzy—but in time I followed her example, although more discreetly and with less conviction.

At this point, the relationship between us changed radically. However bad a marriage may be—even a so-called "open marriage," which pretends to tolerate occasional, meaningless, casual affairs—it is based on a kind of loyalty: to one's choice as much as to one's partner. Once that fundamental loyalty collapses beyond repair, the marriage becomes merely a flag of convenience. I found myself in the role of a domestic hotel manager: I paid the bills and helped with the child and the housework while she lived her real life elsewhere. I wish I could say I did the same, but my sporadic experiments with infidelity rarely brought much joy: I could never get her out of my head, nor the thought of the child I might be losing.

I can remember the precise moment the change began for me. It was an early evening in October and I was on my own, driving into town to a theater, having become, for reasons still obscure to me, a drama critic. On the leafy road beside Primrose Hill I saw my wife's most insistent and obnoxious admirer driving toward me. I caught his eye as we passed each other and nodded politely. But he looked away quickly, pretending not to see me. "He's going to her," I thought, without any reason at all. I sat through the play taking nothing in, spoke to none of my fellow drudges during the

interval, and broke most of the rules of the Highway Code in my race to get home.

By the time I arrived my wife was already upstairs, feigning sleep, but there were two unwashed glasses in the kitchen sink.

So now I knew.

Or thought I knew.

Or refused to know.

Or hoped I knew.

The intricacies, permutations, and perversions were endless: rage, despair, fascination, lust. It was as if every sick fantasy that had been stored away since earliest childhood was finally being dragged out into the light.

After that we were locked together by a strange bond of distrust, paranoia, prurience, and need. We began to read each other's letters on the sly, search each other's drawers and cupboards, sniff each other's underclothes, grill each other relentlessly each time one of us went out alone. We were like two starving prisoners feeding off one another's flesh. But, in a perverse way, we were probably closer during the two demented years of mutual torture before we separated than we were during the first couple of years when we were trying to make a go of the marriage.

Belatedly, I began to grow up—that is, grow less confident that I knew all the answers. The moral and literary certainties on which I had battered for ten years no longer convinced me. I began to see that the world was run in ways that had nothing to do with the insular British virtues of decency, gentility, and politeness, nor with the rhetorical elegance and intellectual superiority of the French. I immersed myself in the history and literature of the concentration camps and became obsessed with all the little self-enclosed hierarchies of power—hospitals, schools, ships, prisons, armies—that shut off their inmates from the sane and indifferent world. Out in the street I used to look with amazement at people going about their business and wonder how many of them were really free, how many of them secret prisoners, secret warders like myself.

Prisoner, warder: the parts were interchangeable. We watched each other continually, timed arrivals and departures and invented fictions for the pleasure of not being believed. Whenever, for instance, she had a rendezvous in town—although I knew and she knew I knew—we went through the same charade. Over lunch she would mention casually that she felt a bit restless; maybe looking at pictures for a couple of hours in the



National Gallery or the Tate would clear her head. I would glower at her, fail to think of some killing witticism, then shrug and go back to my typewriter. Yet each time she dutifully brought home a sixpenny postcard reproduction of a famous painting, like a stamp on her passport. Those postcards were a constant puzzle to me: had she laid in a store of them, or did each purchase involve a hurried, expensive detour by taxi? And did her boyfriend also take one home to his wife and their indulged, grubby children? Were the same steps being trodden in an ever expanding dance all over London? A year or two before, the BBC had first broadcast Beckett's *All That Fall*; one line stuck in my mind: "Christ, what a planet!"

We became locked in a perfect circle: my suspiciousness made her life a misery, which made her desperate to get free, which made her cast around more and more hectically for help, which increased my suspiciousness, which made me, in my turn, cast around, which increased her suspiciousness. It was all perfectly logical. But it also killed off whatever tiny sexual spark remained between us. During our last two years together we shared the same bed without touching one another.

In the end—it had to come—I went to a psychoanalyst, though I was shamefaced about it, since in England in those days to ask for that kind of help was neither a usual nor an easy thing to do. He was a plump, kindly man with a punctured face, a heavy Middle European accent, and, I was told, a special interest in writers. He even turned out to have read my stuff, which seemed a minor miracle. We arranged to meet once a week: better than nothing, although nothing like enough.

My wife hated the idea. She being a specialist in silence, the idea of all that talk grated on her unreasonably, particularly since she assumed we were talking about her. Which was partly true. The problem was, most of the time I did not talk at all. It took me half or more of each session to get back to the point where we had left off the week before.

The meetings continued sporadically for eighteen months, between two trips to America. Although they were a relief and a reassurance, neither the analyst nor I thought of them as anything more than a holding operation. I saw him as I saw my friends, through the wrong end of a telescope. I felt I would need to shout to make myself heard over the distance. Most of the time, it didn't seem worth the effort. So I remember what went on less distinctly than the setting: the gloomy, overstuffed room lined with books mostly in German, poetry and novels and existentialist philosophy, as well as the texts of his trade; his desk littered with notes in a

microscopic hand and letters from a firm of stockbrokers. Isolated images to go with that of my wife dancing with an embarrassed friend, languidly, as though almost asleep, her hair blotting out his shoulder; or of the way her mouth and jawline seemed to thicken when she was angry; or of the hot, anxious voice of my small son describing a nightmare in which he was swallowed by a huge cat; or of the cleansing chill of the pond where I swam.

Then one day, after about twelve of the eighteen months with the analyst had passed, I was jolted briefly out of my apathy.

"Tell me," said the formal Germanic voice from just behind my right ear, "why don't you leave your wife?"

I lay still for a moment to attend to this, then rolled over on the couch and stared at the doctor's plump thighs, then at his round, sad belly, finally at his sad owl's face. He watched me attentively.

I said, "It's never occurred to me."

"Please," he replied, "we do not have time for games. We meet only once a week. It is not enough. It is not nearly enough. But in that short time we must do what we can. Frankness is essential."

"I was being frank. It has frankly never occurred to me."

"Please," he repeated wearily. "For one year you have been coming to me. For all that time you have complained, when you have spoken at all. True, you do not always complain about your wife. Much of the time you complain about yourself. But always I am thinking that you tell me about yourself only what your wife makes you believe. In all that time you have tried to present me only with your wife's image of you. At last it seems you are growing tired of that image. Or should I say, you are growing out of it?"

"But I couldn't leave my child. I'm too much of a Jewish father for that."

"And please do not blame your Jewishness. For an intelligent man, you are strangely conventional. You will not cease to be a father by living apart. You may be more of one."

"Perhaps," I said doubtfully.

There was a silence. A subdued bell rang for the next patient. I could hear discreet murmurs as he was shown into the waiting room. I felt old and tired and tremulous; I wanted to cry for no good reason. So this was where all that great passion and moral ambition had led me: to a weary, unanswerable voice with a funny accent asking why I hadn't got the hell out.

The subject was never mentioned again and it was another year before I finally up and left her. We moved house, then went to America again, where we fought even more bitterly until my wife left prematurely for England. I wandered around in a state of

shock, like an amputee, another casualty of the war I'd been too young to fight in. I came back to England for Christmas, made even more of a mess of things, then went back to finish the term at the university where I was teaching. By the time I returned to London in February, it was all over bar the formalities. She had her lovers, I acquired mine, although we continued to share the same bed, sleeping back to back, night after lousy night.

The crisis came at my beloved pond. It was a hot summer's day and I had arranged to meet a girl there. We swam out to the raft and lay stretched in opposite directions, head to head, discreetly untouching. Then I looked up and saw my wife marching across the causeway to the pond.

I sat up and said, "That's torn it."

The girl giggled.

My wife swam sedately out to the raft, stared at us with loathing, then swam sedately back again. Nothing was said; there was nothing to say. I sat on for a moment while the girl watched me, not knowing whether to laugh or be appalled.

Then I dived in and swam after my wife. But by the time I reached the landing stage she was already in the ladies changing room, and by the time I had changed she had gone.

I caught up with her on the hill back to our house. We shouted at one another incoherently, we pushed each other about. She ran, I ran after her. More shouting and pushing and stumbling around. The passersby stared.

Then it was all over. I left her standing on the pavement, hurried home, packed a suitcase, hugged my child, and was gone.

A few days later she and the boy left for a holiday in Greece which we had already booked. I went to Poland with a Uher tape recorder and a ticket paid for by the BBC. When I returned she was still away. I took my books, clothes, and most of the paintings I had had before we married. Everything else I left: four years of accumulated furniture and knickknacks, each chosen and put in its place with care; four years of records, hi-fi, cutlery, crockery, glass, linen, towels; the new washing machine I had bought six weeks earlier to placate her; the whole tedious impedimenta of setting up home. When I finally closed the door on that silent, elegant house, I had never felt so free in my life.

When I told my parents what had happened, my father, who had a weakness for the ladies and also a way with them, nodded judiciously. "A beautiful girl . . ." He paused. "But . . ." He had the thoughtful, intimated air of a connoisseur testing a dubious vintage. ". . . but too big for you."

"We're the same height, for God's sake."

"Are you?" said my father, the expert. "Are you really? Ah, well."

For the first time in months I began to laugh without afterthought, without restraint.

That moment with my father was the first time I realized that perhaps this divorce might be the luckiest thing that had happened to either of us. God alone knew what kind of warped and diminished creatures we would have become if we had remained locked together in combat. But the moment passed quickly enough and the heartache returned in a different form. I felt ashamed. Not taken aback, not angry, not socially embarrassed (I left that to my parents, though they never complained), simply ashamed at such undeniable, such comprehensive, failure. I had thought I could do anything if I tried: write books and poems, climb rocks, mend things, even play club rugby. And because I had a small gift in one area and competence in several, I had assumed that everything would be forgiven and forgotten. Now I discovered that my account had been scrupulously kept and I had to pay the whole score: all the evasions, the sleights of mind and tricks of style, the white lies, missed appointments, and unanswered letters. All of them had been called in by this marriage, the one thing I had wanted to do well. Failure in that canceled out the successes elsewhere and revived failures I thought I had forgotten or hadn't even recognized. Every last one of them.

While we were living together, doing each other down was our own special form of intimacy. But our collusion did not end when we separated. Instead, we exchanged roles. She gave up the parties, stayed at home in the evenings, read books, and soon settled down with someone she had met in Greece that summer, while I gave up reading and devoted myself to a deliberate and dreary bout of promiscuity. My sexual problem had disappeared, as if by some perverse magic, almost as soon as I left her, but I didn't believe it, and was afraid that this double gift of competence and pleasure might vanish as abruptly as it had arrived. So I set about trying to test it on every girl I met, dourly, as though my existence depended on it. Which in a way, perhaps, it did.

I became a standard divorcing bore, alternately whining about my broken marriage and boasting about my paltry conquests to anyone who would listen. I didn't stop even when I saw their faces stiffen and their eyes begin to water with the effort not to yawn. On and on, until even my best friends stopped inviting me.

Then, gradually, the pieces began to go back together again, although the shapes they formed were no longer the same. It was less a question of recovery than

of forgiveness: forgiving my wife for the role I had forced her into, forgiving myself for having been so perverse, so theoretical, so stupidly vulnerable. As the heartache receded, it came to seem less an affliction than a part of being young, like marching from Alder-marston or listening to folk songs ancient and modern, to Joan Baez, plangent as the girl next door, or to Bob Dylan doing his nasal, urban variations on the same old themes.

Once I understood that the sexual bad times were not going to come back, I relaxed and became more of a man, less of a liability. Women no longer seemed to me the castrating enemy, or the philanderer's quarry, or the mysterious Other; they were simply different, equal but different, to be encountered or even loved for what they were, not for the fantasies I could weave around them; and if I was lucky, they sometimes responded to me in much the same way. It was a lovely, talkative Australian who first made me see, after all those years of expensive British education in male exclusiveness, that women could be likable as well as lovable. But we had met too soon after I left my wife, which meant that she became involved in the confusions of that very confused time, above all in my terror of being trapped once again. So after a couple of years we split up.

A month or so later, I called in on a friend who lived just round the corner. But he was abroad and had lent his flat to two girls, one of whom, a schoolteacher, I knew slightly. The other had blue eyes, an easy smile, and a terrible cold. She also had a degree in clinical psychology, though she had recently dropped the rat-running and statistics and was now training to be a child psychotherapist. She was Canadian (without quite realizing it, I seemed to have had my fill of Englishwomen), and two years in London had not yet reconciled her to the dank climate and primitive domestic heating. Her nose was red, her hair a mess, and she was bundled up in a hideous, sky-blue woolen dressing gown. But there was a glow about her and a firmness, like a tree with fruit on it, rooted, and the fact that she was looking her worst when we met seemed to create an odd intimacy between us. We also discovered that we made each other laugh. I came away thinking that domesticity might not be such a bad thing after all, and maybe I had done enough time with my hurt.

But healing is a slow process. You grow attached to your injuries. There is even a certain status in being one of the world's walking wounded. It becomes a habit, an unflinching excuse for behaving badly. So for three years we were on and off like the lights in Piccadilly Circus, breaking up, coming together, breaking up, each time a little more weary with the perverse itch for trouble that prevented us from accepting what was

becoming more and more inevitable. When we finally married we had had enough divorces to last a lifetime.

And so we lived happily ever after—as happily, that is, as can be managed by two consenting adults.

As for my first wife, I wonder now what she was really like. Confused, restless, angry, frustrated: all that is obvious. But also yearning, I suppose, as most young people are. Yearning romantically as befitted her romantic, headlong good looks and her inheritance from an even more romantic and headlong grandmother. Yearning sexually, as she had to, given my inadequacy with her, given our inadequacy with each other. But also yearning for a life outside. As a young girl she had been a gifted dancer for whom great things were promised. But when she was sixteen, just before her London debut, a clumsy partner dropped her, damaging her knee, and that put an end to her career in ballet. "Good thing, too," she used to say. "You cannot imagine how stupid ballet dancers are. I'd have died of boredom." No doubt she was right and perhaps she even meant it. But all those years of hard work and dedication had left their mark. She was prepared for something better and more demanding than a bad marriage. Cooking and mothering were all very well—and she did both very well—but housework she viewed with total contempt. So we hired a series of *au pair* girls—all of them obsessed equally with their boyfriends, their periods, and their complexions—while my wife wasted hours on the *Times* crossword puzzle and skimmed two detective stories a day. Only outsiders—the endless invited guests and increasing hordes of casual droppers-in—were able to bring her abruptly and charmingly to life. Alone with me she seemed eaten up with indolence in the way nineteenth-century heroines were wasted away by consumption. It was an affliction, rotting her life, and I was part of it.

That much I can reconstruct from the facts as I remember them. And from those facts I recognize that I let her down unforgivably, despite my best intentions, or maybe because of them. For which, God knows, I am sorry. I also regret the blind waste involved. It seems insulting that two relatively intelligent, relatively passionate people should have squandered their twenties so injuriously, in such bad blood.

All that I understand rationally, as though abstractly, from the distance of another marriage and twenty years. Yet still, when I try to remember what it really felt like at the time, all I can come up with is her anger: continual, unyielding, mute. Her anger, my stupidity. Perhaps they amount to the same thing in the end. But to understand is not necessarily to excuse, and no amount of regret can blot them out. □

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THE STRANGE POSTHUMOUS CAREER OF CLAUDE MONET

by Jerome Klein

Was the artist of Giverny an Impressionist or an Expressionist?

Sudden reversals in an artist's reputation, especially after his death, are not uncommon, but few are as contradictory and perplexing as the transformation during the past quarter-century of the image of Claude Monet. From the lyric genius of Impressionist radiance, he was regarded as a painter of inner torment in his last years, only to be hailed by his former detractors as a true forerunner of the twentieth-century Expressionists. This phenomenon cannot be understood without an accurate historical perspective on the changes that took place during Monet's late years as well as in the cultural climate since World War II.

At the turn of the century the sixty-year-old painter could look back on a steady ascent to world renown from the moment in 1874 when he and his fellow Impressionists were rudely rebuffed at their first group exhibition. His *Impression—Sunrise* (whence the group was derisively dubbed Impressionists) had been ridiculed then as a "formless monstrosity."

Painting directly from nature without preparatory studies and without a hint of a system (he never in his life wrote a word of theory), he worked in a manner first described by the artist-journalist Georges Jeaniot in *La Cravache Parisienne* of June 23, 1888: "Once in front of his easel, he draws in a few lines with the charcoal and then attacks the painting directly, handling his long brushes with an astounding agility and an unerring sense of design. He paints with a full brush and uses four or five pure colors; he juxtaposes or superimposes the unmixed paints on the canvas. His landscape is swiftly set down and could, if necessary, be considered complete after only one session, a session



which lasts . . . as long as the effect he is seeking lasts, an hour and often much less. He is always working on two or three canvases at once: he brings them all along and puts them on the easel as the light changes. This is his method."

Out of this practice emerged in the early nineties his series of haystacks, another of poplars, still another of the façade of Rouen Cathedral, each work running an amazing gamut of color intensity and subtle nuances in harmony and texture.

Alongside his home in the village of Giverny, northwest of Paris, he built a water garden on which he employed six gardeners. The profusion of flowers provided him with an abundance of themes without his having to travel as much as he had in the eighties in search of landscape motifs. He undertook a new series, far more challenging and difficult than the previous ones: the water lilies. After a decade of work on the theme, he wrote in 1908 to his friend the critic Gustave Geffroy, "These landscapes of water and reflections have become an obsession. They are beyond the powers of an old man, and yet I want to succeed in rendering what I perceive." He destroyed many canvases and recommenced.

Despite the artist's misgivings, expressed in a letter to the dealer Durand-Ruel, that those of the water lily series remaining after he had burned several were "really not good enough to bother the public with," the dealer persuaded him to exhibit them in 1909. The critic Jean-Louis Vaudoyer wrote: "None of the earlier series . . . can, in our opinion, compare with these fabulous *Water Landscapes*, which are holding spring captive in the Durand-Ruel Gallery. Water that is pale



blue and dark blue, water like liquid gold, treacherous green water reflects the sky and the banks of the pond and among the reflections pale water lilies and bright water lilies open and flourish. Here, more than ever, painting approaches music and poetry.”

Years before this triumphant exhibition, Monet had dreamed of creating a mural on the water lily theme, to be donated to the state as a monument summing up his artistic achievements. Though hampered by weakening eyesight, first diagnosed in 1912 as cataracts, he began in the midst of World War I to execute the mural in a huge new studio designed to hold the entire series of large panels, and built with materials specially requisitioned, despite wartime shortages, on orders from Premier Georges Clemenceau, Monet’s close friend.

Within two years he had completed eight of twelve panels and begun work on the other four. Thiébaud-Sisson, art critic of *Le Temps*, visited Giverny early in 1918 and pronounced the work the most poetic, exalted expression of Monet’s genius, an opinion he later recorded in a memoir of the visit. Other visitors were no less enthusiastic.

In Monet’s efforts to complete the mural to his satisfaction he encountered two formidable obstacles. First, he was compelled to paint new versions of several panels because of changes in the plan imposed by government officials; second, he found it harder, at times impossible, to work because of eye failure. By the spring of 1922, when the contract for the official donation was completed, his sight was so far gone that he

wrote Marc Elder, a writer who wished to visit Giverny in connection with a monograph he was preparing: “I shut my door to everyone all winter. I felt that otherwise each day would be diminished and I wished to profit of what little remained of my vision in order to bring certain of my decorations to completion. And I was gravely mistaken. For in the end I had to admit that I was ruining them, that I was no longer capable of making something of beauty. And I destroyed several of my panels. Today I am almost blind and I have to renounce work completely. It’s hard, but that’s how it is: a sad end despite my good health.” When Elder arrived at Giverny shortly afterward, he found shreds of slashed canvas hanging from stretchers in the studio.

After fitful efforts to resume work in the summer, Monet made a visit, at Clemenceau’s insistence, to the Paris ophthalmologist Dr. Charles Coutela on September 7, 1922. The examination disclosed vision of 1/10 in the left eye and a worse condition in the right eye, which had only “good projection.” Dr. Coutela recommended surgery, but, as he explained in a letter to me in 1960, Monet was extremely fearful of the effects of surgery on his color vision, and took advantage of a slight amelioration effected by the application of mydriatics, which improved vision in the left eye to between 2/10 and 3/10, to postpone the operation.

After inevitable further deterioration, Dr. Coutela removed the cataract from the right eye in January 1923. Following the operation the membrane reformed in the right eye. According to Dr. Coutela, Monet succumbed to a period of discouragement, even

despair: "He saw himself blind for all time and, completely demoralized, refused to leave his bed."

Dr. Coutela removed the membrane in a second operation during the summer and found adequate visual acuity with little distortion in his patient; but he noted that Monet "is most upset by the colors: he sees everything too yellow," a rare condition known as xanthopsia. This later gave way to a predominance of blue in his color vision.

An artist friend, André Barbier, prevailed upon Dr. Jacques Mawas, a specialist in prescribing corrective lenses, to visit Giverny. Monet showed Dr. Mawas some canvases he had been working on in the summer of 1924, complaining, "It's disgusting, I see everything in blue." When asked how he knew he was painting in blue, Monet explained that the tubes of color were always set up for him in the same order, enabling him to tell which color he was selecting. The artist spoke of destroying paintings he considered unsatisfactory, and Dr. Mawas later recalled seeing him put his foot through some canvases.

Monet was discouraged by the failure of the first lenses prescribed by Dr. Mawas to improve his color vision. He wrote to the doctor in the spring of 1925, apologizing for his procrastination in trying a new set of glasses, and pledged to do so when he was in better spirits, "Even though I am more certain than ever that a painter's vision can never be regained. When a singer has lost his voice, he retires; the painter operated upon for a cataract has to give up painting, and it is this which I could not do. Excuse my candor."

Even in these periods of despair and visual confusion, Monet would set up his easel on the border of his water garden and fling himself into work, painting what the writer Louis Gillet has aptly described as "wild landscapes, of a more and more feverish aspect, in impossible color schemes, all red or blue. . . . One trembled for the *Water Lilies*. What would have happened if he had decided to retouch them with this aberrant palette?" Gillet concluded that it could only be considered a miracle, due to the intervention of a spirit from on high, that the artist was able to complete the huge mural "without a false note."

But only two months after conveying to Dr. Mawas his feeling of utter hopelessness, Monet wrote to André Barbier that he had adjusted to the new Zeiss lenses ordered by Mawas, joyously reporting, "My vision has improved tremendously. I am working harder than ever. I am pleased with what I do, and if the new glasses are better still, I would like to live to be a

hundred." He lived just a year and a half longer, dying at the age of eighty-six in December 1926.

By the time the murals were installed, the following year, in the Orangerie in Paris, Monet's reputation among critics and the public had suffered a reversal. The water landscapes were regarded as so amorphous that one critic called Monet "the victim and gravedigger of Impressionism." In the catalogue of the first loan exhibition at the newly opened Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1929, the museum's director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., observed that the four pioneers of modern art represented in the exhibition, Cézanne, Seurat, Gauguin, and Van Gogh, had "come out of the Impressionist blind-alley," embodied above all in the art of Monet. "There are few moments in the history of art so removed from esthetic intention and so closely approximating a laboratory experiment as are Monet's series of 'Haystacks.'"

The internationally known art historian and critic Lionello Venturi similarly dismissed Monet for lack of structure, particularly in the Rouen Cathedral series, "the most evident indication of Monet's creative decadence." Sir Kenneth Clark, the distinguished English connoisseur, took an equally dim view of the same series, calling it a "disastrous" choice of subject matter because "gray Gothic façades do not sparkle. In an attempt to make them vehicles of light Monet painted them now pink, now mauve, now orange; and it is evident that even he . . . did not really believe that cathedrals looked like melting ice-creams."

Such negative views of Monet remained virtually unchallenged in critical writing throughout the second quarter of this century. Then, early in the 1950s, the French modern painter André Masson touched off a new, sympathetic response when he hailed the murals of the Orangerie as "the Sistine Chapel of Impressionism." The Museum of Modern Art, which for a quarter-century had found no place for Monet in its program, acquired one of the large mural panels that had not fit into the final scheme at the Orangerie. There also appeared on the market for the first time some of the smaller, wild easel paintings Monet had desperately turned out in periods of confused sight and extremely distorted color vision in the early twenties.

Except for the handful of visitors to Giverny during Monet's last years, no one had seen these canvases. They had remained in the house under the watchful eye of Blanche Hoschedé-Monet, the artist's mainstay after the death in 1911 of her mother, Monet's second wife. According to the Monet specialist Robert Gordon, members of the Hoschedé family informed him that during the German occupation in World War II, in order to safeguard the paintings Blanche received as

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The Strange Posthumous Career of Claude Monet

a visitor General Erwin Rommel, commander of German forces in the area, who liked to look at the Monets; he reciprocated by declaring the Monet house “off limits” to his troops.

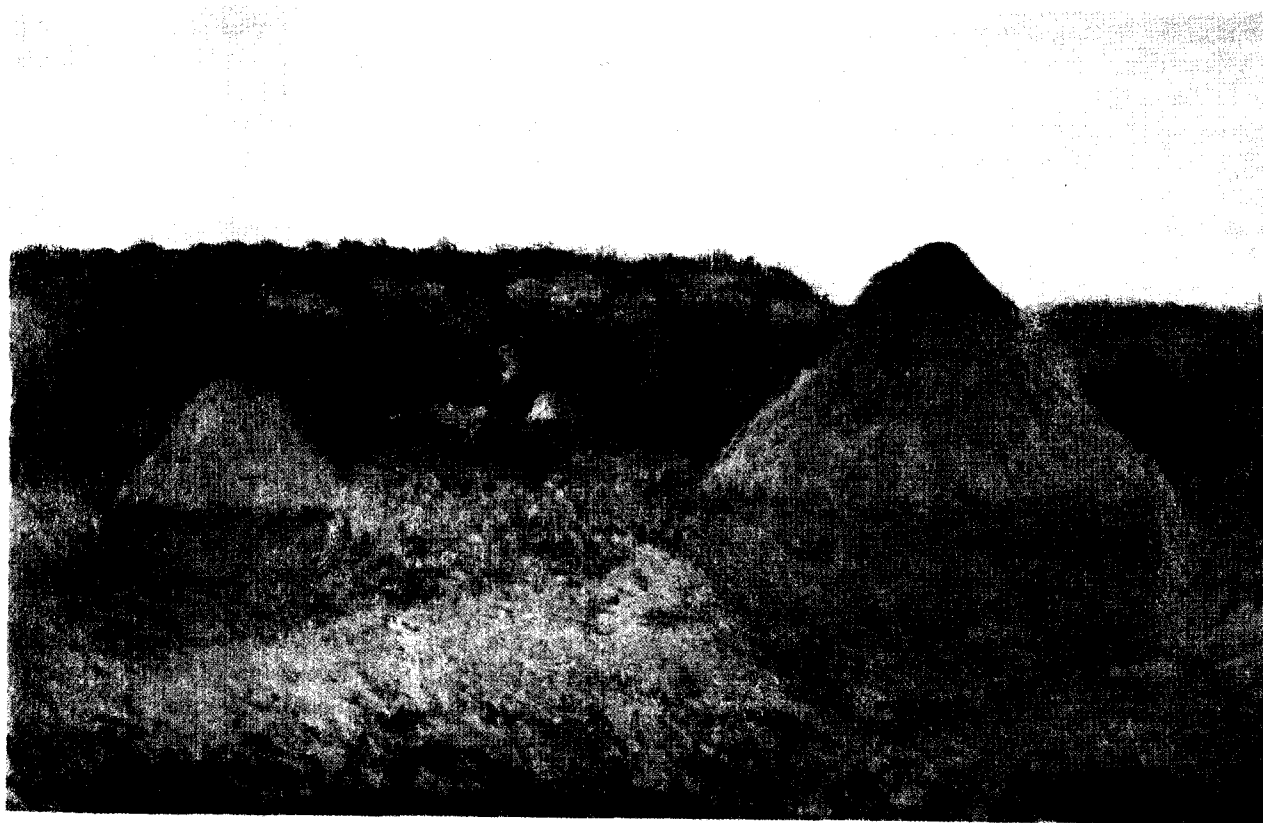
Blanche had been trained as a painter by Monet, had worked alongside him for decades, and was more familiar than anyone else with his scruples against leaving anything that would diminish his reputation. Up to the time of her death in 1947, she never permitted even the loan of any of the questionable late works. But a few years after her death, Michel Monet, the only surviving direct descendant of the artist, known best for his dedication to elephant hunting, began to release them to the art market through the Paris dealer Katia Granoff.

By the mid-1950s Monet had become the “rediscovered modern.” The American Abstract Expressionists, just then emerging as the dominant new movement, embraced the Monet of the ragged late easel paintings as a pioneer of their own vehement thrust toward accidental effects. One of their chief advocates, art critic Clement Greenberg, contended that Monet had opened the way to his “prophetic greatness” when he abandoned his efforts to create “finished” pictures. Greenberg argued that Monet gained strength and unity as he “became slapdash . . . in the end he discovered a new principle, and it lay not in Nature, as he thought, but in the essence of art itself, in art’s ‘ab-

stractness.’ That he himself could not recognize this makes no difference.”

The sale of the “rediscovered” late easel paintings increased rapidly, especially in the United States. The Museum of Modern Art bought two of the easel paintings, and many other museums and private collectors hurriedly followed suit in what one collector referred to as “a regular gold rush.” When the Museum of Modern Art placed on view its third acquisition among the late Monets, a blurred, predominantly red view of the water garden and Japanese footbridge, Alfred Barr expressed admiration for the vigorous brushwork and near-abstract paintings of nature by the artist he had once regarded as “just a bad example.”

Since then it has become an almost unquestioned tenet of critical writing that the late Monet easel paintings, especially the series on the Japanese footbridge, are the link to twentieth-century expressionism. Evidently in support of this idea, the Museum of Modern Art, in its recent fiftieth-anniversary exhibition, hung a Monet Japanese footbridge scene alongside Chaim Soutine’s *The Old Mill*, a painting done, incidentally, in the early 1920s, at the same time that Monet was immersed in his troubled, final phase. The Soutine is a writhing landscape that is nonetheless an artistically complete, coherent expression of the painter’s besetting anguish. By contrast the Monet is at best semicoherent.



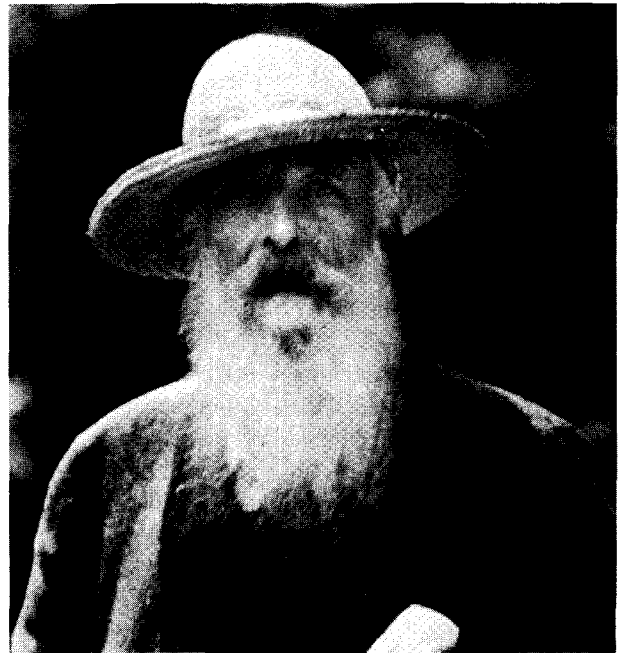
Two Haystacks, signed Claude Monet 91

Almost entirely overlooked in the current cult of the late Monet is the contradictory image of the artist who created both the most subtle nuances in his water lily murals and the coarse, often confused work characteristic of many of the easel paintings done in the last five or six years of his life. Larry Rivers, the American painter closely associated for many years with the Abstract Expressionists, is one of the few observers of this contradiction. After visiting the 1960 Monet exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art eight times, Rivers wrote in a review: "There are lots of scrubby canvases included, excused by some because Monet couldn't see so well after a certain time." Rivers cited a predominantly blue-green *Japanese Footbridge* in a private collection, and others, "all of them—awful—the beginning of insensitivity as an admirable quality in paintings."

The new vogue for Monet is mistakenly nurtured by the characterization of him as a man who in his eighties became transformed into a deeply disturbed person as a result of his visual affliction. But his rage and frustration over his blindness, impelling him to destroy many works (Clemenceau estimated the total of destroyed canvases at 500), was simply a more intense outburst of the kind he had been given to throughout most of his adult life whenever the weather or other circumstances kept him from the one thing he wanted to devote himself to wholeheartedly: painting. His behavior in no way paralleled the well-known suicidal tendencies of some of the leading Abstract Expressionists.

His settling at Giverny in the early eighties, opening up for him a rich variety of new landscape motifs in the surrounding countryside, had at the same time posed challenges that could leave him exasperated. He had written to Durand-Ruel: "The countryside is superb, but so far I haven't been able to take advantage of it. Moreover, I haven't painted for so long that I am going to have to ruin a few canvases before I succeed. And then it always takes a while to get to know a new landscape." When frustrated by the failure of a painting, or by weather so bad that he could not work outdoors, he would become dejected, roam the fields endlessly in an effort to work off his bad mood, sometimes even staying in the little hotel in nearby Vernon rather than impose his ill temper on his family. But when his painting was back on the track, he would quickly recover his normal good temper, and there was never a trace of his passing disturbance in his canvases. Even in his last years, an improvement in Monet's condition would restore his equanimity.

In the matter of destroying canvases he found unsatisfactory, he was undoubtedly given to excess. The American painter Lila Cabot Perry, his neighbor at Giverny for many years, recounted how in the late 1880s she had selected a landscape she wanted to buy



Monet shortly before his death

for a friend, but Monet put her off because he said it was not finished; when she inquired again some weeks later he told her he had had it burned. There were periodic burnings during the succeeding four decades of his life. He was determined, he told a friend, not to suffer the misfortune of Manet, whose studio sweepings had been gathered up by dealers after his death.

In short, Monet was an incurable perfectionist. It is not hard to judge what would have been his attitude toward the easel paintings that have been saluted as "late masterpieces." Blanche Hoschedé's refusal to lend them during her lifetime implies a certitude on her part that she was complying with the artist's wishes. Further supporting evidence is found in the absence of a signature from all but a few of the late canvases. It had always been his practice to sign and date a painting when he was ready to let it go. Most of the late paintings were neither signed nor dated, though some bear the studio stamp, affixed after his death.

It is the crowning irony of his posthumous "redemption" under the leadership of the avant-garde that the painter of whom Cézanne reportedly said, "Monet is only an eye, but, my God, what an eye!" should be credited with opening the way to a new twentieth-century aesthetic through a mode of painting that disturbed him so deeply because it was entirely conditioned by the failure of his eyesight. The "rediscovery" of Monet tells us more about the tastes and interests of the art establishment than it does about any discovery of a "new principle" by the artist in his last few years. The prevailing view of the artist's development is epitomized in the remark of one critic that he had begun



The Japanese Footbridge at Giverny, about 1923

one step from Corot and Courbet and had ended one step from Jackson Pollock.

True enough, Monet had begun just a step from Courbet, who had encouraged the young artist while expressing astonishment at his unheard-of undertaking in painting a large figure composition out-of-doors. Implicit in what was to be a lifelong pursuit of *plein air* painting was a development that did not carry Monet toward Jackson Pollock. Rather, it bore him further away from the palpable world of Courbet to a filmy world in which objects and their reflections appeared equally insubstantial in a matrix of luminous radiance. In a series of paintings portraying morning mists on the Seine near Giverny, the artist achieved such a delicate balance of sky and foliage against their waterborne reflections that the paintings could be hung upside down without essentially changing their character. This is the sense in which he had brought his vision to the brink of abstraction. And he had accomplished it

in a series dated 1897, several years before he had any serious eye trouble. In the water lily murals he carried the process a step further by tilting the view to eliminate the horizon, so that the sky appears only as a reflection.

The prevailing approach to the late Monet will probably not change significantly until a clearer perspective is attained on the achievements and limitations of the Abstract Expressionists. The late easel paintings would then fall more readily into place, not as the harbingers of a new era in twentieth-century art, but as striking examples, many of more clinical than aesthetic significance, of unremitting efforts by the artist to carry on against all obstacles in search of the summit embodied in the water lily murals. In his own words, he sought the "illusion of an endless whole, of water without horizon or bank; nerves tense from work would relax there . . . the refuge of a peaceable meditation in the center of a flowering aquarium." □

Come On Back

A story by
John Gardner



Forty-five years ago, when Remsen, New York, was called “Jack” and nearly all the people who lived there were Welsh, my uncle, or rather my maternal great-uncle, E. L. Hughes, ran the feed mill. His name is no longer remembered in the village, and the feed mill is in ruins, set back behind houses and trees so that you have to know it’s there to find it. There’s a big sprawling Agway that already looks ancient, though it can’t be more than fifteen or twenty years old, on the other side of town.

I seldom get up to that area anymore, but I used to visit often when I was a child living with my parents on their farm outside Batavia. My grandfather Hughes, whom I never knew except by the wooden chest of carpenter’s tools he left my father and a few small, tattered Welsh hymnbooks he left my mother, had originally settled in the village of Remsen, or just outside it, and for years, even past the time of my uncle Ed’s death, my parents made pilgrimages back to see old friends, attend the Cymanfa Ganu festivals, visit the white wooden church called Capel Ucca, and keep a casual eye on the mill’s decline. At the time my grandfather and his brothers came over, Remsen was generally viewed, back in Wales, as a kind of New Jerusalem, a shining hope, a place of peace and prosperity. There was a story of a Welshman who landed in New York and, looking up bug-eyed at the towering buildings, said, “If this is New York, what must Remsen be!”

In those days it was a sleepy little hamlet beside a creek. Though the Depression was on in the rest of the country, you saw no signs of it in Remsen. On the tree-lined streets with tall houses set back from them, each with its roses, small vegetable garden, and grape arbor, there were shined-up square cars, mostly Model

A Fords, and occasional buggies. (My Uncle Ed, one of the richest men in town, had a black and green Buick.) Milk was still delivered in squarish glass bottles by an orange horse-drawn cart; coal for people’s furnaces came on a huge, horse-drawn wagon, black with white lettering: *W. B. Price & Sons, Coal & Lumber*. The horses were chestnut-colored Belgians, I remember, so immense and so beautiful they didn’t seem real. At the end of almost every driveway, back behind the house, there was a two-story garage with chicken wire on the upstairs windows. If you shouted from the driveway, one or two of the chickens would look out at you, indignant, like old ladies; but however you shouted, even if you threw pebbles, most of them just went about their business. The people were pretty much the same, unexcitable. There weren’t many houses, maybe twenty or thirty, a couple of churches, a school, Price’s lumberyard, and a combination gas station and market.

As we entered, from the south, my uncle Ed’s high, gray mill reaching up past the trees into the sunlight was the first thing we’d see. The mill was to the left of the narrow dirt road, a three-towered, barnlike building set back beyond the lawn and flower garden that rose gradually toward the brown-shingled house where Uncle Ed had lived for years with his wife, my great-aunt Kate. I remember her as an occasional bright presence, soft-spoken and shy, in my uncle Ed’s kitchen or in his “camp,” as they called it, on Black River. She wore thick glasses that made her eyes look unpleasantly large. They shared the house, or anyway the basement, with Uncle Ed’s younger brother, my great-uncle Charley—Cholly, they called him—who helped out at the mill for room and board and a trifling wage. Across the road from the mill and Uncle Ed’s house stood a blacksmith’s shop, then still in operation, a dark, lively place full of coal smell, iron smell, and horse smell. All day long it rang like a musical instrument with the clanging of iron on iron, just far enough from the house and mill to sound like bells. The creek ran behind the blacksmith’s shop, a bright, noisy rattle. I used to catch tadpoles and minnows there, though it was deep in places, and if my grandmother found out I’d been playing in the creek I got spanked. The building’s gone now, and the creek’s fallen silent, grown up in weeds. I remember the building as small, made of stone burned black inside, crowded, outside, with burdocks whose leaves were always wet with the mist from the waterfall that rumbled day and night not far upstream.

I was five or six, still at that age when a day lasts for weeks and everything you see or hear or smell seems vividly alive, though later you can get only glimpses to serve as memories—or anyway so it seems until you start to write. This much comes at once: the large,

grinning figure of my uncle Ed, Uncle Charley next to him, timidly smiling, dwarfed beside his brother, and standing not far from them Aunt Kate with a dish towel and teapot. I get back, too, a little of the sunlit world they inhabited, seemingly without a care, as if forever. On one kitchen wall they had a large, black pendulum clock on which the four was written *IIII*; I could never decide whether the thing was a mistake (I was aware that the Welsh were prone to make curious mistakes) or something more mysterious, brought down from the ancient, unimaginable time when, according to Uncle Ed, the Welsh lived in caves and trees and couldn't talk yet, but had to get along by singing.



In those days everything was for me—for me more than for most children, perhaps—half real, half ethereal. It was not just the stories Uncle Ed liked to tell. In our farmhouse I slept with my grandmother, and every night before she turned off the bed lamp she would read me something from the Bible or the *Christian Herald*. I don't remember what she read, but I remember seeing pictures of bright-winged angels playing harps and singing—beings she insisted were entirely real, as real as trees or hay wagons. She made my world mythic—her own as well. During the day she would sometimes go out in our front yard with a hoe and kill grass snakes. It made my father, who was a practical man, furious. “Mother,” he would ask, “what *harm* do they do?” “They bite,” she would say. Sometimes my mother would try to defend her. Grandma Hughes had lived in Missouri for a time, where there were rattlesnakes, and she was too old now to change her ways. “Even a darn fool *mule* can be reasoned with,” my father would say—he was a breeder and trainer of plow horses—but he wouldn't pursue the argument. To me, though, steeped in her Bible and *Christian Herald* stories, nothing seemed more natural than that my grandmother in her righteousness should be out there in the dappled light below the maple trees, her bright blue eyes narrowed, her hoe blade poised, every nerve on the lookout for serpents.

“Did you ever *see* an angel?” I once asked her. Since there really were snakes, it seemed to me probable that there were angels.

“Not that I'm aware of,” she said.

I thought it over. “Did my dad?” I asked.

“I doubt it,” she said, then bit her lips together, trying not to smile.

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So I knew on my grandmother's authority, to say nothing of Uncle Ed's, that there was more to the world than met the eye, or rather, knew that there were two worlds, and it came to seem to me that Remsen, like the valley where Jacob saw the ladder, was one of the places where they connected. Perhaps it was Remsen's peculiar, clear light, or the sense of peace my whole family seemed to feel there, gathering with relatives and friends to sing hymns in Capel Ucca those bright Sunday mornings; or perhaps it was simply the other-worldliness of a village that spoke Welsh. It was true that time had stopped there, or at the very least had paused. We had no blacksmiths' shops in Batavia. Mr. Combs, who shod my father's horses, came with his equipment in a panel truck. And the mill where my father took his grain, the G.L.F., was like a factory—freight cars on one side of it, track on track of them, and inside, wherever you looked through the billowing white dust, big iron machines and men in goggles. My uncle Ed, when he worked in the old-fashioned mill in Remsen, wore a suit. It was gray with grain dust, and it was a little disheveled; but it was a suit. (Uncle Charley wore striped bib overalls.) Uncle Ed's machinery was mostly wood and made very little noise, just a low, sweet humming sound, with rhythmical thumps.

I would sometimes be left overnight with the two old men and Aunt Kate while my parents went off with younger relatives to some “sing.” There was always a sing on somewhere around Remsen. “Every time three Welshmen meet,” people said, “it's a choir.” In those days it was more or less true. Everywhere my parents drove, they sang, almost always in a minor key and always in harmony; and every time relatives got together they sang, in almost as many parts as there were people.

I'd be alarmed when my parents began dressing for a sing, telling me in falsely sweet voices that I was to stay with my uncles and aunt and be a good boy. My grandmother, if she was there, would insist on going with them. Though she was nearly eighty, she had a voice like a bird, she claimed. The songfest wouldn't be the same without her. Uncle Charley would shake his head as if disgusted, though everyone said he'd had a wonderful tenor voice when he was younger. In those days, they said, he wouldn't have missed a Cymanfa Ganu or an Esteddifodd—the really big sing, where hundreds and hundreds of Welshmen came together—for all the tea in China. Uncle Charley would blush like a girl when they spoke of his singing days. “Well, a body gets old,” he'd mutter. “Pride!” my grandmother would snap. “Sinful pride!”

She was a woman of temper; she'd been a redhead when she was young. But for all her sternness, she loved Uncle Charley as she loved nobody else—her husband's youngest brother, just a boy when she first

knew him, all his life the one who'd been of no account. "That voice of his was his downfall," she said once to my mother, wiping dishes while my mother washed. "It gave him ideas."

To me, a child, it was a puzzling statement, though my mother, ruefully nodding, apparently understood. I tried to get my grandmother to explain it later, when she was sitting at her darning in our bedroom—more my bedroom than hers, she would say when a certain mood was on her. Another puzzling statement.

"Grandma," I asked, "how come Uncle Charley's voice gave him ideas?"

"Hush now," she said. That was always her answer to troublesome questions, and I knew how to deal with it. I just waited, watching her darn, making a nuisance of myself.

"Well," she said at last, then stopped to bite a thread. She looked at the end, twirled it between her fingers to make it pointed, then continued: "Singing's got its place. But a body can get to thinking, when he's singing with a choir, that that's how the whole blessed world should be, and then when he comes down out of the clouds it's a terrible disappointment."

I suppose I looked as puzzled as ever, imagining people singing up in the clouds, like the angels in her pictures.

She leaned toward me and said, "Uncle Charley never found a good woman, *that's* what's wrong with him. Bills to pay, whippersnappers—*that'll* bring you down from your *la-la-la!*"

I gave up, as puzzled as before and slightly hurt. I knew well enough—she never let me forget—what a burden I was, not that she didn't kiss me and make a great to-do when I was dressed up for church or had done something nice for her, dust-mopping the bedrooms without being told to, or helping her find her brass thimble. (She was a great mislayer of things. It made my father sigh deeply and shake his head.) I was, in general, as good a child as I knew how to be, but it's true, I was sometimes a trouble. I justified her existence, I realize now: living with my parents, too old and poor to live alone, she didn't have to think herself a nuisance to the world. As my babysitter, she made it possible for my mother to teach school and for my father to work in the fields all day. All the same, I'm sure I ran her ragged, and there were times—especially when my parents had somewhere to go after dark—when I was as much trouble as I dared to be.



I hated those nights when my parents left me—for a Grange meeting, at home, or for a sing when we were in Remsen. I'd live through them, I knew—I might even enjoy myself, after a fashion—but the

night would be darker than usual outside the big old Remsen house when my parents and grandmother weren't somewhere within call, upstairs, or in the elegant, dimly lit living room. The mill, much as I loved it by day, looked ominous from Uncle Ed's kitchen window after dark. It would seem to have moved closer, blocking out the starlight like an immense black tombstone. I would hear the clock on the kitchen wall solemnly knocking the seconds off—*tock . . . tock . . .*, the silence so deep I could also hear the clock on the desk in the living room, hurrying as if in panic—*tick-tick-tick-tick!* . . . The sunflowers at the end of the garden would be gray now, staring back at me like motionless ghosts, and the blacksmith's shop across the road, a darker blot in the surrounding darkness—weeds all around it, hushed as if listening to the clatter of the creek—was transformed in my mind to a terrible place, the overgrown hovel of a cum-witch.

I would whine, hanging around, clinging to the white porcelain doorknob as my parents dressed. "Why can't I come with you?" I'd say. My mother's eyes would remain on the mirror, concentrating hard on the eyebrow pencil. Though she was fat, I thought she was amazingly beautiful. Her hair was dark red. "You can, when you're bigger," my father would say, standing behind my mother, chin lifted, putting on his tie. In the bathroom my grandmother would be singing, loosening up her voice. She *did* sound like a bird, I thought grimly. Like a chicken.

In the end, knowing I had no chance of winning, I would pretend to be seduced by Aunt Kate's molasses cookies and the promise that Uncle Ed would tell me stories. Sulking a little, to show them I didn't intend to forget this, I'd walk with my parents as far as the door, keeping an eye on their red, beaming faces and listening, full of disapproval, to their loud, cheerful talk as they took leave of my uncles and aunt and went down the wooden steps between the house and the big, dark mill to greet the relatives who had come for them in their car. The inside lights of the car would go on as the car doors opened, and in that little, square-windowed island of light I'd see grown-up cousins and children cousins a little more than my age squeezing over, climbing onto other cousins' laps. The alley between the mill and the house would fill up like a pool with laughter and shouts of "Watch your elbows!" and sometimes my father's voice, carefully patient, "That's all right, Mother. Take your time." Then the doors would close, leaving only the headlights, and the car would *chuff-chuff-chuff* past the mill and, listing like a carriage, would go around the corner at the end of the garden, then, listing again, taillights like two garnets, would veer out onto the road, briefly lighting up trees. When the taillights were out of sight I would turn, trying not to cry, to Uncle Ed, who would lift me and

carry me on his shoulder like a feed sack to the kitchen. "So," he would say, "I guess you didn't know I used to work for a bear!"

"I don't believe it," I would say, though I did, in fact.

"Big old black bear name of Herman. Use to live up by Blue Mountain Lake."

He often set his stories on Blue Mountain Lake, or on nearby Black River, where his camp was (he would take us there sometimes, to my grandmother's dismay)—an immense log and stone lodge filled with stuffed lynxes, wolves, and owls, Japanese lanterns overhead, and on the rustic tables a whole museum's worth of strange objects Aunt Kate had collected—little models of birch canoes, carved figures, a stereopticon with pictures of Paris long ago. The lodge was set in among trees, all but inaccessible, a wooden dock below it, where Uncle Ed's guide boat was tied during the day. The water on the river, shallow and clear as glass, seemed hardly to move, though when you dropped a leaf on it it quickly sped away. Fish poked thoughtfully in and out among the shadows of underwater weeds, and when you looked up you saw a world almost equally strange—pinewoods and mountains, large hurrying clouds of the kind I thought angels lived on, huge white mounds full of sunlight. Whenever Uncle Ed began to speak of the Adirondacks, you knew that in a minute he'd be telling of his childhood in Wales, where people lived in cottages on dark green hills with their sheep and collie dogs, and nothing ever changed.

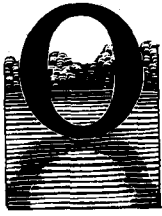
All through supper Uncle Ed would tell me stories, Aunt Kate tsk-tsking, moving back and forth between the table and the stove, patting my head sometimes, telling me not to believe a word of it. Uncle Charley would sit grinning sheepishly, sometimes throwing me a wink, sometimes saying a few words in a high-pitched voice, trying to make me think it was the parrot, Bobby Watson, who stood watching and pecking at lettuce in his cage in the corner. Uncle Charley was as small-boned as a sparrow and had startling eyes, one brown, one blue. Though he was almost as old as Uncle Ed, he had light brown hair and a brown moustache—a shiny, soft brown with hardly any gray in it. Perhaps it was partly the way he sat, head forward, eyes lowered, his hands on his knees except when he raised his fork or spoon: he seemed, even with all his wrinkles, just a boy, no bigger around than Uncle Ed's right arm. People who didn't know them thought Uncle Charley was Aunt Kate's brother, not Uncle Ed's. She too was, she liked to say, petite. After supper, while Aunt Kate washed dishes and the two old men went out to the mill to "catch up"—really to smoke cigars—I would bang on Aunt Kate's piano in the living room. The piano was a good one, a Storey & Clark upright. In the Tiffanied

dimness of the living room, its coal-black surfaces shone like mirrors, or like Black River at night, and everything I played on it sounded to me like real music. I would lose all track of time, closing my eyes and tipping my head to the piano sound, dark, sustained chords that in my mind made a shadowy place you could move around in, explore like an old-time Indian. When my uncles and aunt came together again, after the dishes and cigar smoking, they'd call me back and we'd play dominoes at the kitchen table. After an hour or so, Uncle Charley would say, grinning, not meeting anyone's eyes, "Well, time to turn in by gol, ant-it?" and he'd go down to his room in the basement.

I'd sit a little longer with Uncle Ed and Aunt Kate. They must have known how I hated to go upstairs alone in that big, quiet house; but it was Aunt Kate's habit to listen to her records—some of them old, thick Edison records, most of them opera—and sew for a while before going up to bed, and it was Uncle Ed's habit to settle down across from her, heavy and comfortable as an old gray cat, draw on his steel-rimmed spectacles, and read.

They were both too old to go climbing that narrow back stairway twice. (The front hallway stairs were wide and glossy with a runner down the steps; I don't remember anyone's ever using them much except my cousins and me, playing Chinese School.) Aunt Kate was brittle and climbed steps one at a time. As for Uncle Ed, he was huge, for a Welshman, with hair as white as snow. When I began to nod, he'd say, looking at me over the spectacle rims, "You run and put your pajamas on, Buddy. We'll be up in a jiffy." As I think back to it, it surprises me that I didn't make a fuss; but I obeyed without protest, knowing I'd be long asleep before they got there.

Once in a while I'd wake up for a minute when they came, and I'd see them in their white flannel nightgowns, kneeling beside the bed. Pretending to be asleep—I slept on a cot across the room from them—I'd watch them bow their heads, side by side, and press their hands together just below their chins, and I'd listen to their whisperings in Welsh. Uncle Ed had three stubbed fingers, cut off in a gristmill when he was young. His rounded shoulders were enormous. In my memory, no doubt inaccurate, they went a third the length of the bed. In the mill, during the day, Uncle Ed was like a king, lifting heavy feed sacks as if they were nothing, chattering lightly past his dead cigar, mostly in that clicking, lilting gibberish he spoke; but now, for all his size, he was as much like a child as Uncle Charley, or Aunt Kate there beside him. The only light in the room was the dim one on the table beside the bed. It made his hair look soft, like a baby's. Aunt Kate's hair was like fine silver wire.



One time when we were visiting, Uncle Charley took what they all called later “a tumble.” I’m not sure how much of it I actually saw. I was, as I’ve said, only five or six. A few sharp images have stayed with me all these years, but for the rest I must trust imagination and family stories. I remember sitting in the office at the mill—that time or some other time—drawing on one of the yellow, legalized note pads Uncle Ed used for figuring and keeping records, the potbellied stove unlit in the corner. It was August; I know because farmers were bringing their wheat in. All around the stove stood pale, bluish salt blocks, the slippery blue-white of bone in a butcher shop, and stacked around the salt blocks there were bales of twine and barbed wire, kerosene lanterns, and zinc-coated buckets set one inside the other, the top bucket filled with nails. Outside the window I could see Aunt Kate’s garden, aglow at that time of year with roses, zinnias, and sunflowers, vegetables down the middle, at one end a scarecrow in a coat and straw hat that had once been, no doubt, Uncle Charley’s. There were farmers in the room with me, ritched back on their round-backed wooden chairs, talking and joking as they always did while they waited for Uncle Ed to grind their grist and then for Uncle Charley to load the bags on the two-wheeled feed truck and roll them to the dock, then lift them down a foot or two onto the wagon. No doubt I’d been running back and forth with Uncle Charley for most of the morning, since that’s what I usually did, neither of us talking—Uncle Charley almost never talked, except when he pretended to be the parrot in the kitchen—I, for my part, trying to be of help: snatching an empty feed sack from his path, though in fact there was plenty of room; trying to push a heavy door open farther. But now I was in the office, weary of the game, half-listening to the singing of the wooden walls as they resounded to the mill wheels, and drawing rabbits so much like those my father drew (rabbits were all he knew how to draw) that, if you’d asked him later, he couldn’t have told you for sure which one of us had done them.

I heard no shout, no noise of any kind, but suddenly the farmers were up out of their chairs, running in their heavy boots from the office into the mill, and as fast as I could get down out of my chair I was after them. Where the wooden machinery thudded and sang, sending up white powder, nothing was wrong. Uncle Ed stood blinking as the farmers ran up to him and past him, then he pushed the worn-smooth wooden lever that made the rumbling stop, caught me up in his arms, and ran after the farmers. When we came into the sunlight beyond the open door, we found Uncle Charley climbing up from between the loading dock and one of the farmers’ wagons, furiously shouting and

wiping dirt from his mouth and moustache. The wagon had been carelessly parked, a three-foot gap between the dock and the wagon bed. On the wagon, where Uncle Charley had dropped it when he stepped into the gap and fell, a sack lay split open, slowly drizzling grist down through the slats onto the ground. He shouted louder than before, no doubt swearing in Welsh—an amazing sound from a man always so quiet—and with a look half enraged, half guilty, he tried to get up on his feet and save the grain. Then another look came over him—surprise, indignation—and one leg, cocked like a corn-knife, flipped out from under him. Uncle Ed set me down, almost threw me from him, and jumped onto the wagon, holding out his arms as if to pick up Uncle Charley, then thought better of it, or got confused. He just stood there, bent at the waist, arms thrown forward, like a child playing catch.

At the top of the stairs across the way, the back door of the house opened, and my grandmother came out in her knitted black shawl. “Land of Goshen!” she cried in a loud, angry voice. “Now look what you’ve done!” My father came out behind her, looking baffled and apologetic, as if, if he hadn’t been taking a nap, he could have prevented it. “Now stop that,” he said to my grandmother, almost absentmindedly, and instantly she stopped. Tears ran down the sides of Uncle Charley’s moustache and he clung to his leg with both hands, not shouting now, clamping his lips together and whimpering. Then Aunt Kate was there with them, nearsightedly bending forward. “I’ll call the doctor,” she said, turning, and went back into the house.

“It’s all my fault,” one of the farmers said, shaking his head and working his jaw as if in a minute he meant to hit himself.

“Here now,” Uncle Ed said, “let’s get you inside,” and carefully fitting his arms under Uncle Charley, taking pains to support the broken leg, he lifted him like a newborn calf and carried him up onto the loading platform, over to the steps at the far end, then down and across the way and up the wooden stairs toward the kitchen.

“Mercy!” my grandmother said, unable to control herself, her eyes as bright as when she went out with a hoe to kill snakes. My mother took her arm and patted it.

I was of course not aware at the time that they all felt as guilty as I did. Even my grandmother, I realize now, must have felt guilty, shouting at us all as if she secretly believed she should have taken better care of us. But whatever they were feeling, they soon got over it, once Uncle Charley was inside, on the couch in the living room. I myself took longer. It was a matter of fact to me that if I’d been doing my job, running along with Uncle Charley and his feed truck, keeping his way

clear and watching out for trouble, he'd never have fallen down and broken his leg. The doctor, when he came, was professionally grave. Aunt Kate wrung her hands in her apron. I offered, bursting into tears as I did so, to pay Uncle Charley's doctor bills. Uncle Ed just looked at me, lips puckered in surprise. None of the others seemed to have noticed what I'd said. "I really will," I bawled, clinging to his leg.

"Here now," Uncle Ed said. "Katy, get this boy a cookie!" Then: "Go on, now. Away with you both!"

I went with her, looking over my shoulder at Uncle Charley, gray-faced on the couch, the doctor in his black suit bending down beside him. They were all smiling now, even Uncle Charley, all of them describing what had happened as "a tumble"—or all except my grandmother, who always took, according to my father, the darkest possible view of things. My mother and father had a fight that night, when they thought I was asleep. My father said my grandmother was an Angel of Death. (His anger may have made him unusually poetic—though now that I think of it, he said the phrase as if he'd used it against her many times.) "If you hate her so," my mother said, "why don't you just send her to the old folks' home?" Thus my mother won, as she always did. When it was clear to them both that she'd won, she said, "Oh, Bill, she's just worried. You know that. She's like a child." I lay in the darkness with my eyes open, trying to make sense of the queer idea.



It wasn't until the following summer that my family visited Remsen again. Letters passed back and forth two or three times a week in the meantime, Aunt Kate telling us of, among other things, Uncle Charley's gradual recovery—not as quick as it should be, she let us know—my mother sending back our family's encouragement and sometimes inspirational poems from my grandmother's magazines. When we finally went to visit it was partly because a Cymanfa Ganu—a singing festival—was to be held nearby, in Utica. At Uncle Ed's I learned to my surprise and dismay—since I disliked change, hated to see any slightest hint that the universe might not be orderly to the core, as smooth in its operations as an immense old mill—that my uncles and aunt, though they'd never before shown much interest in such things, were planning to go to the festival with my parents and grandmother. I learned it by eavesdropping. When I was supposed to be asleep—as Uncle Charley was, down in his basement room, snoring with his mouth open (I'd sneaked down earlier and seen him there, lying with one arm hanging over the bedside)—I crept without a sound down the front hallway stairs and settled near

the bottom to listen to the voices in the living room, just to my left.

Aunt Kate was saying, speaking more softly than usual, "He could do with the lift."

"He's still down, isn't he?" my mother said.

"Oh, Cholly'll be fine," Uncle Ed said, hearty as ever, and gave a laugh.

I listened, uneasy, for what my grandmother would say. When she said nothing, I let myself believe she'd fallen asleep over her sewing.

"He keeps in too much, that's all," Aunt Kate said shyly, embarrassed that Uncle Ed hadn't agreed with her.

"So anyway, we'll all go," my father said, settling things. "Take Buddy too. He's never been to a Cymanfa Ganu yet. High time he went!"

"Heavens to Betsy!" my grandmother burst out. (It was clear to me now that she hadn't been asleep.) "You'd let that poor whippersnapper stay out till midnight with a bunch of wild lunatics howling their miserable heads off?"

A shiver went up my back. I was much too literal-minded a child to fit her description with any kind of singing I'd ever heard of, much less any I'd been in on. I remembered stories my uncle Ed had told me of how the Welsh were all witches in olden times—how they used to fly around like birds at night, and make magic circles among trees and stones.

The following day I was so filled with anxious anticipation I could hardly breathe. Out in the mill I kept close to Uncle Charley, trying to guess every move he was about to make and help with it. He seemed smaller all over, since the accident. Though he wore arm elastics, his cuffs hung low, as did the crotch of his overalls. His hands trembled, and he no longer bothered to put his teeth in. In the past he'd pretended to appreciate my help. Now, as I gradually made out, it annoyed him. "I'll get that," he'd say, kicking a twine bale from the aisle as I reached for it. Or, as I ran to push a heavy door open farther, he'd say, "Leave it be, boy. It's open far enough." In the end I did nothing for him, simply stayed with him because I was embarrassed to leave him and go look for Uncle Ed.

He no longer did the kinds of work he'd done before. The hundred-pound sacks were too heavy for him—he wasn't much heavier than the sacks himself—and when he pushed the feed truck, after Uncle Ed had loaded it, both Uncle Ed and I would watch him in distress, afraid it would tilt too far back, off balance, and fall on him. Mostly, Uncle Ed had taken over the pushing of the feed truck. "Go ahead, then," Uncle Charley said crossly. "It's your mill." To keep busy, Uncle Charley set rat traps, wound wire around old ladder rungs, swiped down cobwebs, swept the floors. He still joked with farmers, as he'd always done, but it

seemed to me the lightness was gone from his voice, and his eyes had a mean look, as if he didn't really think the jokes were funny or the farmers his friends. Sometimes in the office, when the farmers were alone with Uncle Ed and me, one of the farmers would say something such as "Cholly's gettin better every day, looks like," and I would know by their smiles that none of them believed it. I would stand by the heavy old desk full of pigeonholes and secret compartments—Uncle Charley had once shown me how to work them all—trying to guess what Uncle Ed might need: his pocket-sized notebook, one of his yellow pads, or one of the big white pencils that said "E. L. Hughes" in red—but I could never guess which object he'd want next, so I could serve no useful purpose except if he happened to look over and say, "Buddy, hand me that calendar there." Then I'd leap. Out in the mill Uncle Charley moved slowly back and forth with a push broom, needlessly sweeping white dust from the aisles, or hammered nails into loosened bin boards, or mended burlap sacks not yet bad enough to leak. Now and then he'd poke his head in, the buttoned collar much too large for his neck, and ask Uncle Ed if he'd gotten to Bill Williams's oats yet. "I'll get to it, Cholly," Uncle Ed would say, waving his cigar. Uncle Charley would frown, shaking his head, then disappear, going about his business.



Sometime after lunch I found Uncle Charley sitting on the floor beside one of the bins, nailing a round piece of tin—the top of a coffee can—over a hole where bits of grain leaked out. I stood watching him. His hand, when he reached to his mouth for a nail, shook badly.

He pretended not to notice me. After a while I went over and hunkered down beside him, thinking I might hand him nails from the zinc-coated bucket beside his knee, though at the moment his mouth was as full as a pincushion. When he said nothing, I asked, "What's a Cymanfa Ganu, Uncle Charley?"

"Welsh word," he brought out through the nails, and carefully finished driving the nail between his fingers through the tin. Then he glanced at me guiltily, took the nails from his mouth, and laid them on the floor between us. "Means 'Come on back,'" he said, then suddenly—his heart not in it—grinned. "'Come on back to Wales,' that is. That's what all the Welshmen want, or so they think."

He tipped his head back, as if he were listening. The way the sunlight came slanting through the mill—great generous shafts full of floating white specks all whirling and swirling in patterns too complex for the eye to comprehend—it was like being in church. Even better than church. I thought of the trees where Uncle

Ed had told me the Welshmen used to worship their bug-eyed gods—"River gods, tree gods, pig gods, Lord knows what," he'd said. (My grandmother wouldn't speak of it. "Your uncle Ed," she said, "has peculiar ideas.") Abruptly, Uncle Charley dropped his head back down, snatched up a nail, cocked it between two fingers over the tin, and started hammering. "Darn fools," he said, glanced at me and frowned, then winked.

"Tell me something else in Welsh," I said.

He thought about it, placing another nail. At last he said, squinting, "You know what 'Buddy' means?" Before I could answer, he said, "Means 'the poet.' They used to set great store by poets, back in Wales. Only second to kings—maybe not even second. Same thing, kings and poets. Different kinds of liars." He looked solemn, his face ash-gray under the age spots. I studied him, baffled—no more baffled than he was, I realize now; but at six I knew nothing of the confusion of adults. All I knew was that his eyes were screwed up tight, one brown, one blue, and his moustache half covered the black hole of his mouth like a sharp-gabled roof of old straw.

I asked, "Are we *all* going to the Cymanfa Ganu?"

His eyes slipped out of focus, then abruptly he reached for another nail. "Course we are," he said. He lined up the nail and with two angry raps drove it home. "Don't worry," he said, "it don't hurt much."



remember only the inside of the building where the songfest was held. It must have been a church, very large, with wooden walls, as yellow-gray as the walls of a new barn. It was brightly lighted, the walls and overhead beams high above us all glowing as if waxed. Everyone my parents had ever known was there, it looked like. The people milled around for what seemed to me hours, shouting and talking, pressing tightly together, my father moving behind my mother from group to group, carrying me on his shoulders. My grandmother, wearing a light black coat and helping herself along on two brown canes—it was only that winter that she'd begun to need them—went from one old white-haired Welshwoman to another, talking and nodding and laughing till she cried, sometimes pointing a bony, crooked finger across the room and gleefully shouting out a name, though no one could possibly have heard her in all the uproar.

Then somehow we got to seats, all of us together, me wedged in between my father and Uncle Charley. A man got up in the front of the room—he looked like a congressman or a well-to-do minister—and said something. Everyone laughed. He said something more, they laughed some more, and then from somewhere, booming around us, came organ music. Uncle Charley



was jerking at my elbow, making me look down. He held a small Bible-like book with writing in it—no music, as in the hymnbooks in our church at home (I hadn't yet seen the ones my grandfather left my mother), just writing, and not a word anywhere that I could read. "You know your *do re mi*?" he asked, looking at me sternly, his face very bright. I shook my head, noticing only now that above the hymn words, all in Welsh, there were little words—*do, re, mi*, and so on—as meaningless to me at the time as all the others. Uncle Charley looked up at my father as if in alarm, then grimaced, looking back at me. "Never mind," he said, "you sing what *I* sing." On every side of us people were standing up now, a few of them beginning to tap their feet, just barely moving the toes of their lumpy shoes. My father and Uncle Charley helped me stand up on my chair. Suddenly, like a shock of thunder that made the whole room shake, they began to sing.

Most of them seemed to have no need of the hymnbooks and couldn't have used them anyway, singing as they did with their heads lifted, mouths wide as fish mouths, proclaiming whatever it was they proclaimed not so much to the front of the hall as to the gleaming roof. They sang, as Welsh choruses always do, in numerous parts, each as clearly defined as cold, individual currents in a wide, bright river. There were no

weak voices, though some, like Uncle Charley's, were reedy and harsh—not that it mattered; the river of sound could use it all. They sang as if the music were singing itself through them, moving like a current through a forest of seaweed—sang out boldly, no uncertainties or hesitations; and I, as if by magic, sang with them, as sure of myself every note of the way as the wisest and heartiest in the room. Though I was astonished by my powers, I know, thinking back, that it was not as miraculous as I imagined. Borne along by those powerful voices, only a very good musician could have sung off key. It seemed as if all heaven and earth were singing, and when the music broke off on the final chord, the echo that rang on the walls around us was like a roaring *Amen*.

Hymn after hymn we sang—old people, children, people my parents' age—ancient tunes invented before the major mode was thought of, tunes like living creatures, climbing, rolling, growling in the depths. We were outside ourselves, caught up in a *hwell*, as the Welsh say. It really did seem to me, once or twice, that I looked down on all the congregation from the beams above our heads. My father's hand was closed hard on mine; Uncle Charley held my other hand, squeezing it just as tightly. Tears streamed from his brown eye and blue eye, washing his cheeks, dripping from his moustache, making his whole face shine. Afterward, when

we were leaving, I saw that Aunt Kate and my mother had been crying too, even my grandmother, though not my father or Uncle Ed. On the steps outside, lighting his cigar, Uncle Ed said, "Good sing." My father nodded and hitched up his pants, then turned to look back at the door as if sorry to leave. "Good turnout." Uncle Charley, with his hands in his pockets, staring at the ground, said nothing.



The following night Uncle Charley didn't come in for supper, though they called and called. I watched through the kitchen window as Uncle Ed and my father, gray as ghosts in the moonlit garden, shouted toward the trees across the road, the glittering creek, the blacksmith's shop, then turned and moved heavily, as if gravity had changed and the air had grown thick, toward the mill. Later, Uncle Ed, in the wooden armchair in the kitchen, holding his cigar in the hand that had three fingers missing, stared into space and said, "Poor Cholly. I wonder what's got into him."

Aunt Kate stood over by the sink with her head bowed, thinking, folding the dish towel, then unfolding it, then folding it again. "I guess we better phone the police," she said at last.

"No, don't do that!" Uncle Ed said suddenly, as if she'd startled him out of a daydream. He leaned his forearms on the arms of the chair and hefted himself up out of it. "I'll run out to the office and phone around among the neighbors a bit," he said, and at once went to the door.

"Why not phone from here?" Aunt Kate said, or began to say, then glanced at me and stopped.

"Here, let me give you a hand," my father said. The two of them went out, bent forward like shy boys, and closed the door quietly behind them.

"I'll give Buddy his supper," my mother said. "I suppose it won't hurt for the rest of us to wait."

"That's fine," Aunt Kate said, still folding and unfolding the dish towel.

"We should never have taken him to the songfest," my grandmother said. "I *told* you it wouldn't be good for him!"

My mother, herding me over to my chair, said, "Mother, you never said any such thing!"

"Well I meant to," my grandmother said, and firmly clamped her mouth shut.

Toward morning they found him, I learned much later, right across the road in the creek behind the blacksmith's shop. I still occasionally dream of it, though of course I never saw it, Uncle Charley lying face up below the moonlit, glass-clear surface, staring at the quiet stars.

Aunt Kate, it turned out, had known all along that

he'd gone off to take his own life, though she'd refused to believe it and had therefore told no one. She'd found his clothes that afternoon, just a little after sunset, neatly folded and stacked on the chair beside his bed in the room they let him live in downstairs. He'd left them as a message, my grandmother said: for what they were worth, the world could have them back. ("Now that's enough of that," my father said sharply.) Aunt Kate had told herself one foolish lie after another, she explained to us, her hands over her eyes, her glasses on the table in front of her. Perhaps he'd found a lady friend, she'd said to herself, and had gone out and bought himself new clothes, even new socks and shoes.

The following night, when everyone knew Uncle Charley was dead, though no one was admitting it was suicide (they never did admit that), Uncle Ed's living room was filled with people. All the chairs were occupied, even the arms of them, where boys or young women sat, most of them cousins, and there were people on the chairs my father had brought in from the dining room and kitchen, too. The people were all talking in low voices and sniffing, their eyes wet and red. I sat on one of my father's legs, watching.

They talked of the singer Uncle Charley had been; the festivals would never be the same without him. They spoke of what a shame it was that he'd never had a wife and children; it would have made all the difference. Then for a while, since sad talk embarrassed them, they talked about other things—crops and the weather, marriages, politics. Sometimes they talked now in groups of three or four, sometimes all as one group. Aunt Kate served tea. Some of the men had whiskey with them, which Aunt Kate didn't approve of, but she looked at the carpet and said nothing. The clock on the mahogany desk ticked on and on, but neither in the darkness outside nor in the dimly lit living room was anything changing. People stirred a little, now and then, shifting position, moving just an arm or a foot, sometimes blowing their noses, but no one got up yet, no one left for home. Slowly the whole conversation died out like embers in a fireplace, and as the stillness deepened, settling in like winter or an old magic spell, it began to seem that the silence was unbreakable, our final say.

Then an old farmer named Sy Thomas, sitting in the corner with his hands folded, twine around his pants cuffs, cleared his throat, blushed, pushed his chin out, and began to sing. Tentatively, then more boldly, others joined in with him. Aunt Kate went to the piano and, after a minute, sat down, took off her glasses, and began to play. They were singing in parts now, their heads slightly lifted. On the carpet, one after another as if coming to life, their shoes began to move. □

THE BATTLE OF THE BUDGET

by W. Bowman Cutter

Can President Reagan pay the bills? The new administration has begun with promises of strict austerity—but so have others in the past. The author, executive director for budget at OMB under President Carter, spent four years and billions of dollars discovering that the federal budget is intractable. He offers some friendly advice for his successor.

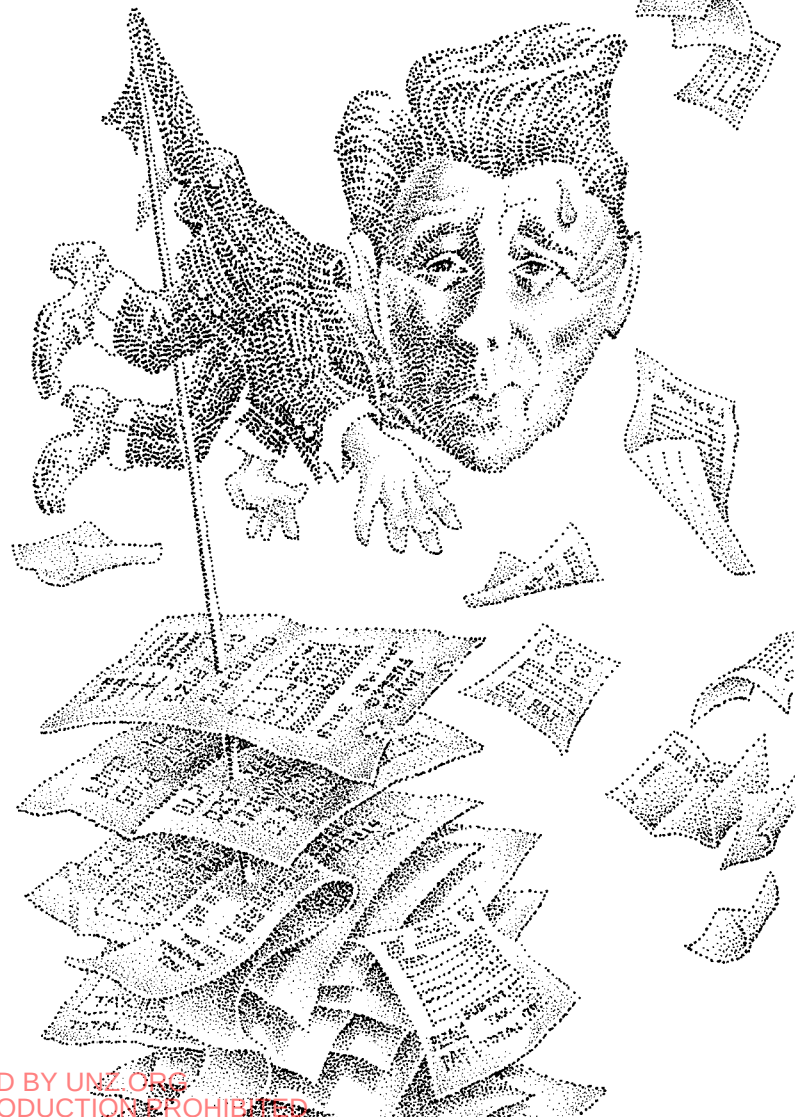
Federal spending is out of control. The stated 1981 budget deficit is \$60 billion; however, I'd bet on \$70 billion or higher rather than \$50 billion or lower—no matter what President Reagan does. In January 1980, President Carter first proposed federal spending for 1981 to be \$616 billion. In March 1980, the estimate was revised to \$612 billion. And in January of this year, President Carter's last budget forecast it to be about \$664 billion. It will end up higher at the end of President Reagan's first fiscal year despite his enthusiastic post-election declarations about cutting it by \$40 billion to \$620 billion. And this leaves out the roughly \$20 billion of spending that, for various preposterous reasons, is kept off-budget.

This predicament was not caused by President Carter, or by any one president. It will not be corrected by one president. It took fifty years to reach this pass.

Five years from now the deficit, counted honestly, could range between \$100 billion and \$150 billion. Federal spending could rise to 25 percent of GNP from the present 22.5 percent, tax burdens to almost 24 percent from about 21 percent at the end of 1980.

These may seem to be small changes; they are not. A one-point increase in spending or taxes as percentage of GNP represents—in five years—a shift of \$50 billion from the private to the public sector. Such shifts could well mean the difference between an economy beginning to recover from the shocks of the 1970s and one spiraling through an experience of alternating high interest rates, high unemployment, and low growth—with double-digit inflation as a constant.

Ronald Reagan is caught in the same trap that snared Jimmy Carter. The federal budget's basic structure was established in the twenty-five years immediately after World War II, a period of extraordinary performance on the part of the U.S. economy. In such a period of sustained real growth, low unemployment, and low inflation, the public sector could steadily expand without any apparent harm to the private sector. Between 1950 and 1980, the budget grew by over 1000 percent, and in the course of that growth established a momentum inconsistent with the limits posed by today's economy. Moreover, despite the budget's huge size, there is no obvious "room." The pro-



grams in the budget are extremely hard to reduce or even slow down. But without such reductions, the impending deficits will not allow the tax cuts or the defense increases Ronald Reagan promised, and which he believes the country needs.

The fact is we are overcommitted. Fifty years of automatic resort to the public purse—indulged in with equal enthusiasm by Democrats and Republicans—have led to a budget with an almost unstoppable momentum whose premises were set in better times. We have an emerging structural deficit (one that persists in good and bad times) the nation cannot afford. We spend too much on income transfers—or at least we spend it without sufficient thought. Believe it or not, we underspend in significant areas. And no party to the process by which we decide on public spending has sufficient power to initiate and sustain a purposeful long-term policy of change.

The sad story of the fiscal 1980 budget

In early 1978, barely one year into his presidency, Jimmy Carter and his principal advisers were deeply concerned about the rising level of inflation and the force of its momentum. At the same time, the managers of the federal budget had become worried about a surge in spending and an impending deficit that was much too large. By March of 1978, my OMB (Office of Management and Budget) staff had predicted that the 1980 deficit would be at least \$55 billion if we did not act, approximately the same level as the deficit forecast for the 1979 budget. To allow another deficit in the neighborhood of \$60 billion in a time of accelerating inflation seemed profoundly wrong—wrong in strictly economic terms, wrong politically, wrong given the President's public commitments to budget control.

In a long set of discussions in May and June 1978, the President was told in detail what a substantial reduction in the deficit would entail. We would have to reduce the tax cut the administration had already proposed—requiring immediate discussions with congressional leaders. His promise to provide growth above the rate of inflation for the defense budget had to mean even worse prospects for the domestic budget. No new programs of any significant size could be proposed. Existing programs for the cities, for transportation, for the environment—programs that already provided benefits, and had clients and constituents (most of them Democrats)—had to be held down or cut back. Legal changes would have to be proposed to Congress to permit reductions in such untouchables as Social Security and Medicare. Federal operating costs would be reduced, federal salary increases would be limited, federal hiring would be restricted.

No one was under any illusions about the difficulty

of this effort for this President. In June 1978, Jimmy Carter was not particularly popular. But any President would have had an extremely tough sale on his hands. Conservatives would be pleased with the direction the President was taking, but displeased with its moderate quality, its necessary concessions to other points of view. On the other hand, much of the Democratic party—where the President had to look for support—would despise the entire effort. The President had to convince one set of skeptics that a policy of restraint was acceptable and appropriate while he persuaded another that too much restraint was inequitable and unfair to those who depended upon federal programs. Despite the obstacles, the President decided at the end of these spring discussions upon a major turn toward restraint.

A policy of restraint, even if applied absolutely evenly, would have been difficult enough. But as President, Jimmy Carter had to make choices between programs, and the choices he felt compelled to make ran against the grain of his party. He was in the process of concluding that the defense budget had to be increased.

The President's evolving attitude toward defense spending had been a source of muted displeasure among many Democrats for more than a year. In his 1976 campaign, he had argued that the defense budget could be reduced by more efficient management. But within six months of taking office, in June 1977, he had permitted Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to announce an administration decision to increase defense by 3 percent in real terms, 3 percent above the rate of inflation. Now it was obvious he was considering extending that defense commitment for a second budget year. A defense spending increase would, of course, mean disproportionate pressure on the rest of the budget; the "rest of the budget" consisted largely of domestic, "Democratic" programs.

For the remainder of 1978, planning for the 1980 budget was a central aspect of the President's domestic policy. By late fall, the 1980 budget had become an issue of considerable prominence. Its general direction was widely known. The standard Washington game of leaking the OMB's budget "marks" prior to budget publication flourished with more than normal intensity. Meetings with the President were requested by the leadership of every group that felt its programs were threatened.

In December the Democratic party's second mid-term convention was held in Memphis, Tennessee. Midterm conventions are always tough on incumbent Democratic presidents. The party believes deeply in a positive government—one that searches out social problems and defines programmatic solutions. But a president has to balance problems, solutions, resources, and opportunities.

This convention had not only the normal, built-in dissatisfactions but also the issue of President Carter's budget directions and priorities to chew on. In his speech to the convention on December 9, 1978, Senator Edward Kennedy tore into President Carter's budget policies.

"I support the fight against inflation. But no such fight can be effective or successful unless the fight is fair. The party that tore itself apart over Vietnam in the 1960's cannot afford to tear itself apart today over budget cuts in basic social programs.

"There could be few more divisive issues for America and for our party than a Democratic policy for drastic slashes in the federal budget at the expense of the elderly, the poor, the black, the sick, the cities, and the unemployed."

In commenting on the speech, Adam Clymer of the *New York Times* wrote, "Senator Edward M. Kennedy today confronted President Carter over the spirit that should guide the Democratic party.

"In a ringing speech to a cheering audience of 2,500, the Massachusetts Democrat seized a building mood at the conference, where unhappiness about budget proposals was heard again and again at workshops on the cities, inflation, arms control and health insurance."

If it accomplished nothing else, the convention made clear that if President Carter continued to pursue his stated budget policies, he was risking major problems with an important part of the Democratic party. The party was not ready to embrace budget restraint.

But President Carter's 1980 budget was tougher than that of any other Democratic president in modern history. In January 1979, he announced a budget for fiscal year 1980 of \$532 billion in spending and \$503 billion in receipts. The deficit of \$29 billion hit the mark he had set publicly the previous November. The domestic budget fell in real terms; grants to state and local governments fell in real terms. Reductions of \$600 million in Medicare and Social Security were recommended. Defense spending was proposed to grow 3 percent in real terms. The President had made his choice.

But was it really? And what did it get him?

Much federal spending is tied directly to economic conditions: if conditions change, federal spending changes. Therefore, when a president proposes a budget, he is also providing, explicitly, an economic forecast upon which that budget depends.

President Carter's 1980 budget had forecast economic growth of 3.2 percent, inflation of 6.3 percent, and unemployment of 6.2 percent. A year later, in

January 1980, the new forecast for 1980 was dramatically different: economic growth of -1.0 percent, inflation of 10.4 percent, unemployment of 7.5 percent. Jimmy Carter was hit at the same time with three of the four factors that force spending up automatically: lower economic growth, higher inflation, higher unemployment. (The fourth factor is high interest rates; in two months he'd have those also.) This time, his 1980 budget was for \$564 billion in spending—an increase of \$32 billion. The predicted deficit had grown from \$30 billion to \$40 billion.

The financial community went crazy. In the intervening year, times and needs had changed. The fall of the shah had precipitated another oil shortage; oil prices had doubled. Inflation had risen to a markedly high level and, more important, had become a matter of national concern and anxiety. It was a fact—but clearly a politically trivial one—that virtually all of the \$32 billion spending increase now forecast was due either to drastically changed economic circumstances—which no president can control—or to defense increases—which the financial world by and large approved of. The 1980 budget no longer represented a policy of restraint; rather, it now seemed symptomatic of the uncontrolled appetite of the federal monster.

After a period of intense turmoil in the markets, the President announced that officials of his administration would begin immediate meetings with the Democratic congressional leadership about the budgets he had proposed only six weeks earlier. In effect, events had forced the President to withdraw and reconsider his budgets. After an eleven-day series of all-day meetings with members of Congress, President Carter at the end of March 1980 presented revised and reduced 1980 and 1981 budgets.

But events continued to grind on. In late October 1980, shortly after the end of fiscal year 1980 and approximately one week before the presidential elections, final federal spending figures for the fiscal year were released. Fiscal year 1980 spending was \$579 billion and the deficit was \$59 billion. Spending had grown by \$47 billion from the time the budget was proposed to the end of the fiscal year; it had grown by \$85 billion over the previous year; the deficit had doubled from the limit President Carter had publicly established. The restrained budget of 1980, upon which Jimmy Carter had spent so much political capital, ended up as a symbol of his profligacy and loss of control.

The "real" budget

One of the small cruelties of American politics is the peculiar requirement that defeated presidents must

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prepare and propose a budget for a time beginning well after their departure from office. The requirement imposes an enormous amount of melancholy, largely useless work. A defeated president has to review his past dreams; decide upon the course of a defense policy he can influence for, at most, thirty more days; consider with his economic advisers fiscal policy for a future he will not affect; adjudicate disputes between his OMB and his Cabinet, knowing that no one will care. It is bitter medicine, but President Carter carried out this painful responsibility with grace, dignity, and humor.

I spent those months working the normal awful hours budget-making requires, but this time there was a difference. From my northeast corner office in the Old Executive Office Building—that magnificent baroque structure next to the White House that once housed all of the State, War, and Navy departments—I could see the excited, intense movement across the street at Blair House when Ronald Reagan came or left, and down the street a bit I could watch the construction of the Inaugural review stands. They were forming a government. We were carrying out the required forms of one that had been dissolved. It was not a task that held much joy, but it forced a great deal of thought about the nature of my work for the past four years.

If, at least in part, politics is about who gets what, then a budget is a statement of a given year's results in that competition. But it is also an explicit or implicit statement about a number of other, more fundamental questions—the appropriate size of government, the value and impact of federal programs, the role of government vis-à-vis the private sector.

The budget process encompasses every major actor in the political system. The budget that emerges annually from this process is an extraordinarily complex crystallization of agreements among institutions, competitors, interests, and philosophies. I believe that its current size and built-in rate of growth raise serious problems; its structure is inappropriate; its allocations of resources are increasingly wrong; and the process that determines it yields self-canceling decisions. But having managed the preparation of five budgets, I'm disturbed by a tendency to underestimate its complexity and to depict changing it as relatively easy. To listen to most political discussions of economics or the budget is to come away with the sense that the federal budget can be changed easily by cutting fraud, waste, and bureaucrats, and that our current situation is one a malevolent government created against the will of the American people.

Reality is different. The budget represents commitments made over decades. Those commitments will not be changed without significant conflict. Of course,

some fraud and waste occur in federal spending. But normally the term "waste" denotes someone else's program. As a senior Defense Department official once said about the defense budget, "At least we don't piss it away on welfare." And finally, despite public mythology, the budget achieved its present state with the knowledge and active connivance of the American people.

Every federal program has numerous supporters, is passed by Congress, and is signed by a president. Very few are repealed. The OMB and the Treasury do not work overtime receiving remittances from citizens giving back federal benefits.

The very scale of the federal budget (\$740 billion in the recently introduced 1982 budget—almost one quarter of the GNP—with 2000 to 4000 programs, depending on definitions, and 1.9 million civilian employees) allows the presumption that change is easy to achieve. Candidates, presidents, and presidents-elect always believe that the "base"—that part of the budget they do not understand—can be cut. Jimmy Carter ran for office on the claim that a new technique—zero-based budgeting—would provide a means to cut that mythical base, make room for new programs, and still allow budget restraint. For four years he was puzzled and irritated by the fact that the choices were so brutal. He grew to hate the budget process.

Even Ronald Reagan—who ran against the federal government—followed the same pattern. During his campaign he committed himself to expenditures and tax cuts as if he were a liberal Democrat. He supported bilingual education, guaranteed loans for the Chrysler Corporation and New York City, increased Social Security, federal employee pensions indexed to inflation twice a year, increased support for the National Maritime Administration, and the largest tax cuts in history. But he chose, predictably, not to identify the programs he would cut, relying instead on the familiar promise to cut waste.

In fact, most general discussions of the budget proceed with virtually no understanding of the structure of the budget. Political leaders, senior business executives, the press, even most public officials, intuitively think of a budget structure in a way something like the following:

Table I: 1980 Budget

Defense	\$135.9 billion
Education	13.8 billion
Energy	6.3 billion
Health & Human Services	194.7 billion
NASA	4.8 billion
Treasury—interest	74.8 billion
The Rest	<u>149.3 billion</u>
	\$579.6 billion

This budget (the actual figures from the 1980 fiscal year, which ended September 30, 1980) shows what the nation buys with its money and suggests, implicitly, how these funding decisions could be changed. A budget organized this way virtually demands certain questions: Why not add \$10 billion to Defense and take it from Health & Human Services (a 5 percent reduction)? or reduce the entire total by \$25 billion (only 4 percent)? This is the budget new presidents believe they face, the one Congress must have in mind when it periodically tries to reduce every agency by 2 percent or 5 percent. This is the budget business leaders think of when they demand austerity. But this is not the budget that has developed over the past thirty years; it is not the budget that drives presidents crazy.

The "real" budget looks like this:

Table II: 1980 Budget

	Billions
A. Required spending	
Payments for individuals	\$255.7
Military pensions	11.9
Other (interest on the national debt, long-term contracts)	172.0
Total	439.6
B. Personnel (largely discretionary)	
Military	30.3
Civilian	38.9
Total	69.2
C. Discretionary spending	
Defense	57.0
Domestic	13.8
Total	70.8
Total	\$579.6

About 45 percent of the total budget consists of required payments to individuals—Social Security, Medicare, military pensions; 30 percent consists of interest payments and long-term contract commitments—water projects, naval ships, solar energy demonstrations or public buildings; and all annual discretionary spending—funds that could actually be reduced in any particular year—makes up the final 24 percent. Salaries for government workers, the Beekeepers Indemnity Fund, public service jobs, foreign aid, the urban gardening program, mass transit subsidies, solvent-refined coal demonstration plants, consulting contracts good and bad, the homeownership assistance program, production costs for nuclear bombs, the Edward Hebert Medical College of the Armed Forces, and anything else one can imagine fit into one quarter of the budget.

This structure means that many intuitive judgments about federal budget policy are wrong. Programs and dollars are not interchangeable or fungible. In the "real" budget, Medicaid expenditures, federal salaries, and HUD planning funds are authorized by different laws; they have different histories and legal bases; and they occur over different time periods. In practice, a president finds that a dollar in one program is different from a dollar in another program.

In 1978, HEW Secretary Joseph Califano offered Jimmy Carter a deal. If the President would increase certain discretionary programs in the "restrained" 1980 budget by a few hundred million dollars, he would return to the President more than that amount in savings—by proposing a number of sensible and small reductions in Social Security. Secretary Califano's offer, in the larger scheme of things, made a great deal of sense. But he was offering to trade uncontrollables for discretionary dollars. The President agreed. Secretary Califano got his budget increases for 1980. Congress never gave the President his savings.

Over time, this structure virtually forces the wrong allocative decisions on presidents and Congress. That part of the budget now taken up by direct payments of income—income transfers—is so large a percentage of the total that it virtually determines the entire budget. Income transfers have a momentum of their own, unrelated to the limits of the economy or the needs of other programs. First, these programs are entitlements: they are assured by law to qualifying individuals; they do not pass through the appropriations process. It is much harder procedurally and vastly harder politically to constrain these programs than it is to constrain any others. Second, income transfers compose a structure of programs erected over fifty years with little attention paid to its internal cohesion. Today, we have Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, supplementary security income (SSI), and aid to families with dependent children. We also have housing programs, training and employment programs, education programs, energy grants, low-income weatherization programs, and nutrition programs. These programs were conceived, passed, and implemented at different times and they are not changed as new programs are established. I'm glad we have them. But I believe that the taxpayer deserves a more cohesive structure, a rationalization, a careful trimming of overlaps and redundancies. Finally, these programs are virtually all indexed to the Consumer Price Index. That is why spending surged so much in the 1980 budget. That's wonderful for the beneficiary, terrible for the budget, and probably unfair to the taxpayer. For the past two or three years, increases in the Consumer Price Index have run far ahead of wage increases. In effect, indexation—in the form we have it now—requires wage earn-

ers to pay taxes funding a larger annual increase in income than they themselves receive.

The effect of this structure of programs is either to force increases in spending that will not always be consistent with sound economic policy or to force other, equally valuable programs out of the budget. Both consequences occur. The truly discretionary spending in the budget is steadily squeezed because it is not legally required. We underfund the investment programs in the budget. We do not sufficiently maintain the government's own facilities and capital investments. I believe, totally contrary to current notions, that we spend too little on federal operations—on such functions as program oversight, or debt management. At the same time, because cuts in these discretionary expenditures cannot compensate for increases in less discretionary areas, the budget grows in an unacceptable manner. It has become increasingly obvious that if we cannot take a long and searching look at the current structure of uncontrollable income-transfer programs, we cannot solve the problems of the budget.

Last fall, in the middle of a long and difficult discussion of one agency with an entirely discretionary budget, the agency head finally hit the table with his fist and said, "When are you sons of bitches in OMB going to do something about Wilbur Cohen's money machine? It's killing the rest of us."¹

Between 1980 and 1981, the federal budget will increase by \$86 billion, or 15 percent. It is commonplace to observe that budget restraint could be easily achieved by limiting these multibillion annual increases. But this completely ignores the real structure of the budget and the source of most of the increased spending.

Table III: 1980-1981
Source of Changes

	Billions \$	Percent
1. Total change	86.7	100
2. Required non-defense spending	61.1	70
3. Defense spending	20.0	23
4. Discretionary non-defense	5.8	7
5. Salaries	6.8	8
6. Asset sales and other revenues	-7.0	-8

As the table shows, virtually all of the year-to-year increases in the budget are either mandatory or the result of policy commitments with which most of the

¹ Wilbur Cohen was one of the founding drafters of the Social Security Act. In the late 1960s, as a senior official (briefly secretary of HEW), he played a major role in the initiation of the Medicare and Medicaid programs. All are uncontrollable, entitlement, income-transfer programs, totaling about \$225 billion today.

nation agrees. Of the total increase from 1980 to 1981, 93 percent goes either for payments that are required by law—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid—or to meet President Carter's pledge to increase defense spending by 5 percent annually: a commitment that the new administration believes to be insufficient.

If all the rest of the budget were held constant, the nation could save \$12.6 billion, not enough to fund President Reagan's defense commitment or his tax cut promises. But in fact, the budget is even less flexible. Much of the \$5.8 billion non-defense increase, for example, consists of projects under construction. To avoid the increase, if we legally could, we would have to leave highways, bridges, dams, and major energy projects partially constructed. Denying the almost \$7 billion in salary increases may, at first, seem reasonable, even attractive—after all, who likes bureaucrats?—until it is recognized that almost 50 percent of these pay increases are for the military. They are intended to improve our forces by increasing recruitment and by slowing the loss of trained men and women. Moreover, I believe it is unfair to deny salary increases to men and women who have made the government civil service their career because we cannot cope with the difficulties posed by other possible forms of constraint.

Nonetheless, if we (1) funded all required programs, (2) continued defense budget increases, and (3) held every other program in the federal budget constant—no pay increases for civilian federal employees, no budget increases of any kind for energy, or veterans' programs, or highways, or parks—we could save \$9.4 billion, or 1.4 percent of the federal budget.

It is a simple but rarely understood fact that the basic structure of the federal budget allows for very little change. To achieve even marginal restraint in its rate of growth requires a president to take on important interests *who have good cases to make*. It is almost impossible to explain to a columnist or an angry constituent why a \$10 million reduction matters in a \$700 billion budget. Such a reduction seems nonpresidential, shortsighted, arbitrary. Moreover, this same budget structure guarantees high rates of increase—rates the nation cannot sustain—into the indefinite future.

The budget process and the President

President Reagan will quickly discover that for truly important issues, such as the budget, his power is extraordinarily limited. I believe that presidential power is far too limited for the system's own good.

It is understandable that it is so. The budget involves the basic stuff of modern government, the issues of

resource allocation the political system really cares about. How much does the Department of Defense get? What water project is built, or park bought? Will Congressman X get a federal building in his district? Should funds go to Social Security increases, for solar power, or for foreign aid? How much does the federal government owe the states, and why? These are the issues local congressional districts, single-issue political groups, major blocs in our society, focus on. They are the issues the system handles best when resources are abundant; they will tie the system—presidents, congress, constituencies, the media—into knots in the 1980s.

The fact that these issues matter to the political system means that all the principal institutions and actors in the system are part of the budget process. Budget-making has become the organizing core of the political-economic structure. It encompasses the President and the executive branch (only in theory on the same side of most issues); Congress: its leadership, its members, its committees (not even in theory on the same side); other levels of government concerned about resources, and turf; major interest groups operating with defiantly single-minded tunnel vision; and the media, as unable as any other force to gain perspective on this overall process. The President, in other words, has competition.

The President may believe to his core that falling productivity requires more private investment and that that requires federal spending restraint. But every interest group in the country will tell the world that, on the contrary, declining productivity requires more public spending on highways, energy projects, education, the Export-Import Bank, job training, and health care.

No one who was there will forget the moment in early 1977, after President Carter had made a brief statement to a gathering of senators about his plans to eliminate eighteen water projects, when Senator Russell Long, whose state stood to lose two of these projects, stood up. "I," he said, "am Russell Long, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee." His message was not difficult to understand.

The budget process is one of Washington's central rituals. It is a task of immense scale and complexity, involving some of the most important questions the political system faces. But, as Ronald Reagan will discover, it is not a process that easily permits steady, consistent change. However, steady, consistent change is exactly what we now require. The momentum an earlier economy imparted to the budget cannot, and should not, be sustained today.

By every relevant measure, the economy performs less well today than it did from 1950 to 1970. Productivity growth is down. Growth in the capital stock is down. Unemployment is up. Inflation is up. GNP

growth is lower. These trends began to become apparent in the early 1970s. They are deep-rooted and systemic, and they limit the policy choices available to any administration. They make the costs of error much higher; they narrow the room for maneuver; they impose enormous caution. At unemployment and inflation rates of 7.5 percent and 12 percent, there are no good choices available to economic policy; what alternatives do exist are fewer and riskier than when both rates are substantially lower. Ronald Reagan will discover that a policy of marginal change is forced upon him. There are no magic buttons.

But the same trends that require so much caution also demand that change begin. At some point we must choose between particular programmatic solutions to particular problems and the health of the system as a whole. No one knows precisely where that point is, but we are certainly closer to it today than we were two decades ago. No one knows if a federal budget of 19 percent of GNP is reasonable; one using 23 percent of GNP is not. No one knows at what point tax burdens truly affect investment and productivity. From now on, presidents must balance the benefits of specific actions against the effects of higher deficits, or higher tax burdens, on the entire system.

I believe that the budget is the fundamental domestic problem the presidents of the 1980s will encounter. The President is the only figure in our political system in a position to consider the most general choices. And if we are to solve the problems posed by the budget, the President will have to explain them to the American people, and spend a term correcting them.

The stakes are enormous. Today's economy delivers less income and more inflation to the average citizen than he expects, it subjects him more often to the threat of unemployment, and it is more vulnerable to the outside shocks that wars, revolutions, or oil markets can impose. If unchanged, the narrowing economic and budgetary choices we face will alter prevailing views about government and society.

Sometime in the 1980s, the President must (1) recognize that the performance of our economy imposes limits upon the government's use of the nation's resources, (2) understand that the underlying, already committed momentum of federal spending is inconsistent with desired economic performance, (3) develop a policy that is compassionate about our ends but rigorous about our resources, and (4) conceive a long-term strategy that brings about the necessary change despite the weaknesses of the present process. Such a president will come to terms with the internal contradictions of modern government, and will redefine the modern presidency. He might well consolidate political power for a very long time. □

GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT TAX REFORM

by Lester C. Thurow

One way to improve America's economic situation is to increase our industrial capacity, which costs money that isn't available because Americans need every nickel to keep up with rising prices. But regular savings can be encouraged, argues one economist, by heavily taxing consumption, by reducing or eliminating state and local taxes . . . and more.

The United States is in the middle of an economic disaster that is unfortunately not an economic crisis. If our current problems are allowed to persist for the next ten to twenty years, they will destroy our standard of living, threaten our international alliances, and jeopardize our domestic tranquillity. But no aspect of the present economic situation is calamitous enough to make us undertake the painful measures necessary to restore our economic health.

While America's productivity was rising 3 percent per year fifteen years ago, it is now falling. With falling productivity comes a decline in standard of living. We have, simply, less output to divide among Americans.

In contrast, German productivity is growing at a healthy 4 percent rate, and Japanese productivity is growing at an even healthier 7 percent rate. Each year, fewer American industries are competitive in world markets. Measured in terms of per capita GNP, the United States now ranks tenth among industrial countries. Every year it slips further.

Energy problems accelerate the decline in our standard of living. Every extra dollar for OPEC means one dollar less for Americans. At the beginning of the 1970s, OPEC took one percent of the American GNP; at the beginning of the 1980s, it took 4 percent; who knows what it will take at the beginning of the 1990s?

But the problems are more severe than a falling standard of living, as painful as that may be. Consider our military and political alliances. Will they be viable ten years from now if America continues to decline, relative to Germany and Japan? Will poor Americans be able or willing to pick up the defense bills for rich Germans and Japanese? If not, what will happen?

Our newly rich allies would have difficulty assuming our present role. Both Germany and Japan are small geographically, and have the added disadvantage of proximity to the Soviet bloc. Germany also has a relatively small population. The Common Market is large in terms of population and economic muscle, but it lacks, and is unlikely to get, the political integration necessary to make speedy international political or military decisions. And the rest of our allies are unlikely to welcome dominant German and Japanese armies.

Energy problems compound the international difficulties. A cutoff from Persian Gulf oil would be painful for the United States, but not an economic disaster, because we get relatively little oil from that region. Faced with a cutoff, we could quickly find enough domestic energy to keep essential activities going. But for Europe and Japan, Persian Gulf oil is essential.

Suppose the Persian Gulf were to be embroiled in war. Would the United States risk substantial military casualties to defend an area in which it does not have a direct interest? The Germans and Japanese do not have armies to send to the Middle East. How long would the American public be willing to see Americans, and only Americans, die to provide energy for Germany and Japan?

In the long run, this geo-economic difference will destroy the Western alliances unless we work together to end a dependency on Persian Gulf oil for the entire Western bloc. Realistically, this means the United States has to become not just energy self-sufficient but also a major exporter of energy.

If the energy problem were simply an economic

problem, it could be left to the marketplace. We allow rising prices to ration valuable land, and we could allow market prices to ration valuable energy. But the energy problem is not a function of scarce resources. It is a problem created by a cartel in control of a substantial portion of those resources.

Industrial economies can handle gradually rising energy prices, but they cannot handle abrupt cutoffs imposed for political reasons by cartel members. If we consider both foreign policy concerns and the economic costs of politically inspired supply disruptions, relief from this dependency becomes an absolute necessity.

At home, political frustration and social polarization can only intensify as standards of living fall. A look at the British shows what will happen. The right wing of the Tory party and the left wing of the Labour party devour the political middle. Middle-class altruism disappears. Programs designed to help the poor and to integrate minorities and women into the mainstream of economic life are abandoned. Social tensions pit group against group. Those pressures are already visible here and will grow worse in an environment of economic failure.

Something is fundamentally wrong, not only with our government but with all of our institutions. Never in our entire economic history has America achieved the productivity growth rates that the Japanese have gained. What used to be referred to as the "best managed corporation in America" (General Motors) has been brought to its knees by foreign competition.

We cannot compete when we have an educational system so poor that the New York Telephone company has to test fifteen individuals to find one literate enough to be a telephone operator. We cannot accelerate productivity when we have a legal system that allows anyone to create uncertainties and delays to the extent that major new industrial facilities, such as the North Dakota coal gasification plant, cannot be built. We cannot tolerate a set of corporate management incentives of such limited horizons that our firms cannot compete with farsighted foreigners. We cannot afford unions that resist technical change and enforce restrictive work rules. Our governmental system of checks and balances may have been right for the eighteenth century, but it does not permit the quick decisions necessary for survival in the twenty-first century. That system will have to be changed.

Before we can advance on the reindustrialization and

energy fronts, we will have to develop a consensus strategy that attempts to distribute equitably the necessary economic pain. We must not use these national goals as an excuse to widen existing inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth and to drive undesired institutions (unions), programs (affirmative action), or groups (blacks, Hispanics, women) out of the mainstream of society.

These dangers are apparent in several current proposals for altering the tax system. Consider the Reagan proposal to stimulate investment by means of lower capital gains taxes. If lower capital gains taxes were limited to plant and equipment investment in new, high-risk, venture capital situations, one could understand the proposal even if one did not agree with it. But the lower capital gains tax rates will also apply to antiques, paintings by Old Masters, land, first homes, second homes, and a wide variety of assets that have nothing to do with reindustrialization. For every dollar's worth of reindustrialization incentives offered, several dollars' worth of incentives will be provided for nonproductive investments. Since speculative investments usually pay off more quickly than productive investments, the net result of the tax cut may even be to increase the diversion of funds from productive to nonproductive investments.

I have a question to determine whether people are really serious about reindustrialization: Which of the many tax incentives for nonproductive investment are you willing to see eliminated? Anyone who says "none" is not really interested in a healthy American economy.

But suppose what we want is energy independence and enhanced productivity growth? Could we do what is necessary without further distorting the distribution of income and wealth? Or is trickle-down (immediate tax cuts for the rich that may lead to more jobs for the middle class and the poor) the only alternative? Fortunately we have still another choice.

If one were writing a history of the past twenty years of tax legislation, it would read like a history of trench warfare. Vast battles have been fought over the proper division of the tax burden between rich and poor, and over the equal treatment of those with equal spending power. But the advances or retreats have been measured in inches. This stalemate has to be replaced by a major structural overhaul.

If one of our national goals is to encourage energy production, then the recently enacted windfall profits tax should be eliminated. One can argue about the extent to which this tax discourages energy production, but more energy would surely be produced without it. The more profitable energy production is, the more energy will be produced. And since we cannot afford to give up any future energy production, no

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matter how small, we cannot afford the windfall profits tax.

Some individuals will undoubtedly become even more wealthy with the elimination of the windfall profits tax. But the personal income tax is the correct place to handle this problem. Other individuals (rock stars) are going to become fabulously wealthy from activities much less important to the national welfare. The rich should pay their fair share of the tax burden, but we needn't discriminate against the oil-rich.

What about the program to produce synthetic oil if no windfall profits tax is available to finance it? Although the production of synfuels requires government involvement, it does not require government investment. The problem arises because the price of imported oil is at least partly attributable to the machinations of a manmade cartel. Suppose imported oil were selling for \$40 per barrel, and we were able to discover a process to make synthetic oil for \$25 per barrel. Could we afford to go into production? If the \$40 price represented the cost of producing imported oil, the answer would be a clear Yes. Given that billions of barrels of oil are consumed, billions of dollars are available to be made.

If the \$40 price is set by a cartel, however, the decision to go into production is not so clear-cut. Large-scale investments would be necessary to make synthetic oil; but what would happen once we started producing oil? The cartel would be forced to cut its price to \$24.99, and we would be left with a huge but worthless production facility. We would have done the world a favor—forced down the price of oil—but we would have lost our investment.

Private investors rarely do social favors that lead to capital losses. Since OPEC production costs (40 cents per barrel in Saudi Arabia is the current estimate) are far below selling prices, no private investor can compete with OPEC. Private investors do not want to risk their investments, and the plants do not get built. As a result, energy independence is not something that can be achieved by liberating free enterprise. Our government can, however, guarantee some minimum price for energy in the 1980s and 1990s. This would eliminate the basic uncertainty and at the same time allow competition between firms to produce alternative forms of energy most efficiently.

Since alternative energy supplies could not be available in the necessary amounts in less than ten years, however, the country also faces the problem of what to do between then and now. In recent months the French have increased their gasoline tax to \$3.50 per gallon. Other countries are approaching this level. Yet we have no tax designed to discourage consumption.

The difference between the French and the American experience with gasoline taxation suggests two pos-

sibilities. Either the French and other industrial countries are stupid and we are smart, or the reverse. To ask the question in this manner is to answer it. Other countries levy those taxes because they know they cannot afford to pay the imported oil bill they would have to pay if they did not actively discourage consumption. But they are wealthier than we (with respect to per capita GNP), and have healthier economies generating larger productivity gains. If they can't afford their imported oil bills, we certainly can't afford ours.

We need the 4 percent of our GNP that goes for imported oil for other, more essential purposes such as defense and investment. Our imported oil bill deprives us of the resources necessary to right our domestic economy, and saps our long-run economic vigor.

Gasoline tax revenue raised by the federal government should be rebated to state and local governments dollar for dollar to the extent that they reduce their own taxes. A tax of \$3 to \$3.50 per gallon would permit the elimination of all state and local taxes. The resulting tax system would be fairer than what now exists in most states. A gasoline tax would be regressive (the tax burden would go down proportionately as incomes go up) but the current system of state and local taxation is even more regressive. The net effect would be a slight decrease in the tax burden of the poor. Such a shift in the structure of state and local taxation would require political courage and public persuasion, but the choice is survival, and eliminating all state and local taxes is not without its political attractions.

Reindustrialization will also require dramatic changes in the tax structure. To increase work effort and investment while lowering consumption, taxes will have to go up on consumption and down on both investment and work effort.

When productivity was growing at 3 percent per year, we were investing 9.5 percent of the GNP in plants and equipment. But investment rose to 10.3 percent of the GNP in the 1970s as productivity was falling.

In 1978, for example, Americans invested 10.4 percent of their GNP in plant and equipment. After correcting for inflation, the total quantity of plant and equipment available for production rose 3.4 percent. But hours of work rose 4.8 percent in the private economy and the amount of plant and equipment per worker fell 1.4 percent. A similar reduction occurred in 1979. It is not surprising that with less equipment per worker, productivity fell.

What happened? The answer is simple. Americans failed to live up to the promises made implicitly during the baby boom. The average American worker in the

past twenty years has had \$50,000 worth of plant and equipment at his or her disposal. Americans who had babies in 1960 were implicitly promising that they would save the \$50,000 necessary to equip their children with the average amount of plant and equipment necessary to enter the labor force in 1980. Although Americans have fed and educated their children, they have failed to equip them for productive work.

The contrast with our competitors is frightening. The Japanese invest almost 20 percent of their GNP in plant and equipment with a labor force that is not growing. More than 10 percent of our GNP is required just to equip new workers. If American workers were to acquire new equipment as fast as the Japanese do, Americans would have to invest 30 percent of their GNP.

But raising investment from 10 to 30 percent of the GNP creates a problem. Until the new factories come into production—five to ten years from now—more investment means less consumption. Tax cuts that will stimulate investment are easy to implement. But the consumption tax increases that will be necessary to pay for them are more difficult.

On the investment side, the best solution is to eliminate the corporate income tax and to integrate corporate and personal taxation. No corporate income tax would be imposed, but each individual shareholder would be liable to pay personal taxes on all income (retained or paid out in dividends) earned by the corporation on his or her behalf. If the corporation declared no dividends but earned a profit, each shareholder would be liable for a tax on his share of that income, and the company would withhold a portion of those earnings in order to reduce the impact of an unexpected tax burden. At the end of the year, shareholders would get the equivalent of a W-2 form telling them how much corporate income to add to their other sources of income, and how much income tax had been withheld on their behalf.

Since corporate after-tax rates of return on investment in plant and equipment would approximately double with the elimination of the 46 percent corporate income tax, corporate managers would have a strong incentive to increase investment. At the same time, the fairness of the tax system would actually increase. Each shareholder, rich or poor, would pay taxes on corporate earnings at a rate commensurate with his own income position rather than at some common rate—e.g. the current maximum corporate tax rate of 46 percent. Those in a 30 percent personal income tax bracket would pay a 30 percent tax on their corporate earnings and those in a 50 percent bracket would pay a 50 percent tax.

At the same time, the maximum tax rates in the personal income tax—now 50 percent on earnings and

70 percent on capital income—should be equalized. Both work effort and investment are essential to economic progress. People with the same spending power should pay the same tax regardless of how they acquire their income.

While corporations are legal entities that write checks to governments, strictly speaking they do not pay taxes. They simply collect money from their shareholders, their customers, or their employees and transfer it to the government.

The corporate income tax has two sources of protection. The man on the street thinks it is a way to tax the rich. This is a mistaken perception. To the extent that it is a sales tax on consumers or a tax on employees, it is not a tax on the rich. And even if it is ultimately paid by the shareholder, it is not a very good tax on the rich. For most of the rich it is a tax shelter, since their personal tax rate is higher than the corporate income tax rate. If we want to tax the rich, the personal income tax is the right place to do it.

Corporate managers also support the corporate income tax, but on the grounds that it encourages firms to retain their earnings rather than to pay them out in dividends. No personal income taxes are paid if the funds are retained and the lower capital gains tax rates apply to the higher share prices flowing from the extra retained earnings and investment. From the individual manager's perception, this means more funds not subject to the competitive bidding of other managers in the financial markets. This perception is undoubtedly true, but shareholders should be encouraged to complain and demand their earnings when their managers are not earning a long-run rate of return competitive with other firms.

Other tax systems do not stimulate investment more than ours but they do act aggressively to hold consumption down. Why does the average American family save 5 percent of its income while the average German family saves 14 percent and the average Japanese family saves 20 percent? Don't foreigners like cars and cameras? Of course they do, but their governments have deliberately structured their tax systems and economies to discourage consumption.

Most of our industrial competitors impose a value added tax (VAT). (Sweden's is now close to 25 percent.) A VAT (a tax based on the "value" any producer adds to the cost of consumer goods) is essentially a national sales tax—a tax on consumption—which you do not have to pay if you don't consume. And if you insist on consuming, government takes a large fraction of your income away from you.

In addition to reducing consumption, the VAT has

the advantage of taxing illegal underground activity. Those who earn their living in the underground economy may be able to escape the income tax, but they must pay VATs when they buy goods and services. The larger the underground economy, the more vital a VAT becomes.

The burden of the tax can also be allocated in whatever way one likes with a refundable income tax credit. Suppose a 10 percent VAT were imposed, along with a \$1000 refundable credit. A family earning \$10,000 and saving nothing would pay \$1000 in VATs, but would get it back in the form of an income tax credit. Up the income scale, the \$15,000 family would pay \$500 (\$1500 in taxes minus \$1000 in an income tax credit) in net taxes, the \$30,000 family \$2000, and so on. With such a credit, the VAT can be made progressive (the fraction of income paid in taxes goes up as income goes up).

A 10 percent VAT—lower than that in most of the rest of the industrial world—would yield about \$235 billion (10 percent of annual private production of goods and services) in revenue. This would be enough to replace the corporate income tax (\$85 billion) and the Social Security tax (about \$150 billion).

Both of these taxes should be replaced. The rationale for replacing the Social Security tax is like that for replacing the corporate income tax. If you want to encourage work effort and discourage consumption, you systematically reduce taxes on work and raise taxes on consumption. To lower taxes on savings and investment while raising taxes on work, as we will be doing under the current system for financing Social Security, is perverse. Work effort is probably even more important than investment.

When you shift from a Social Security tax that does not cover investment income, or even all of earnings, to a value added tax, and a progressive value added tax at that, you are making your tax system more, not less, progressive. The very rich who choose to save and invest can avoid taxes, but the big spenders get hit.

Higher personal income tax collections would yield an extra \$50 billion in revenue. This should be put into the Social Security Trust Fund to build up a large surplus gradually. This is important for two reasons. A government surplus, coupled with the retirement of government debt, would contribute to the national goal of increasing savings. Governments cannot contribute to work effort, but they can and should contribute to savings.

The surplus would also alleviate the coming crunch in the Social Security system when the baby boom generation starts to retire. Between now and then—in the years after 2012—the savings in the trust fund will help make the economy more productive so that we can afford the pensions promised.

Very few people save because they are misers or because they want to die rich. Individuals save to consume. If they can consume without saving, that is precisely what they will do. Therefore, we must design an economic system that encourages individuals to save if they want to consume.

Basically, this means reducing consumer credit. Suppose you could not borrow to buy a car. This would do two things for plant and equipment investment. Someone else's savings would not need to be used to finance your car, and your car savings could be used for plant and equipment investment until you had accumulated enough to buy the car.

A sudden end to consumer credit for large durables would be too great a shock to the affected industries, but the nation should start to move in this direction. We might, for example, announce that the maximum length of car loans would be systematically reduced over a specific period of time. Starting with forty-eight-month loans, the maximum loan would be reduced by twelve months each year over a four-year period. At the end of four years, no one could buy cars on credit. Similarly, mortgage down payments should be systematically increased over time. Every year we might raise the minimum down payment 5 percentage points until we had replaced 20 percent down payments with 50 percent down payments.

No one knows whether these measures would be enough to turn 5 percent American savers into 20 percent American savers, but they would certainly move us in the right direction. If we cannot undertake such painful measures, we cannot solve our problems. No one has yet devised a painless way to induce Americans to save at a rate of more than 5 percent.

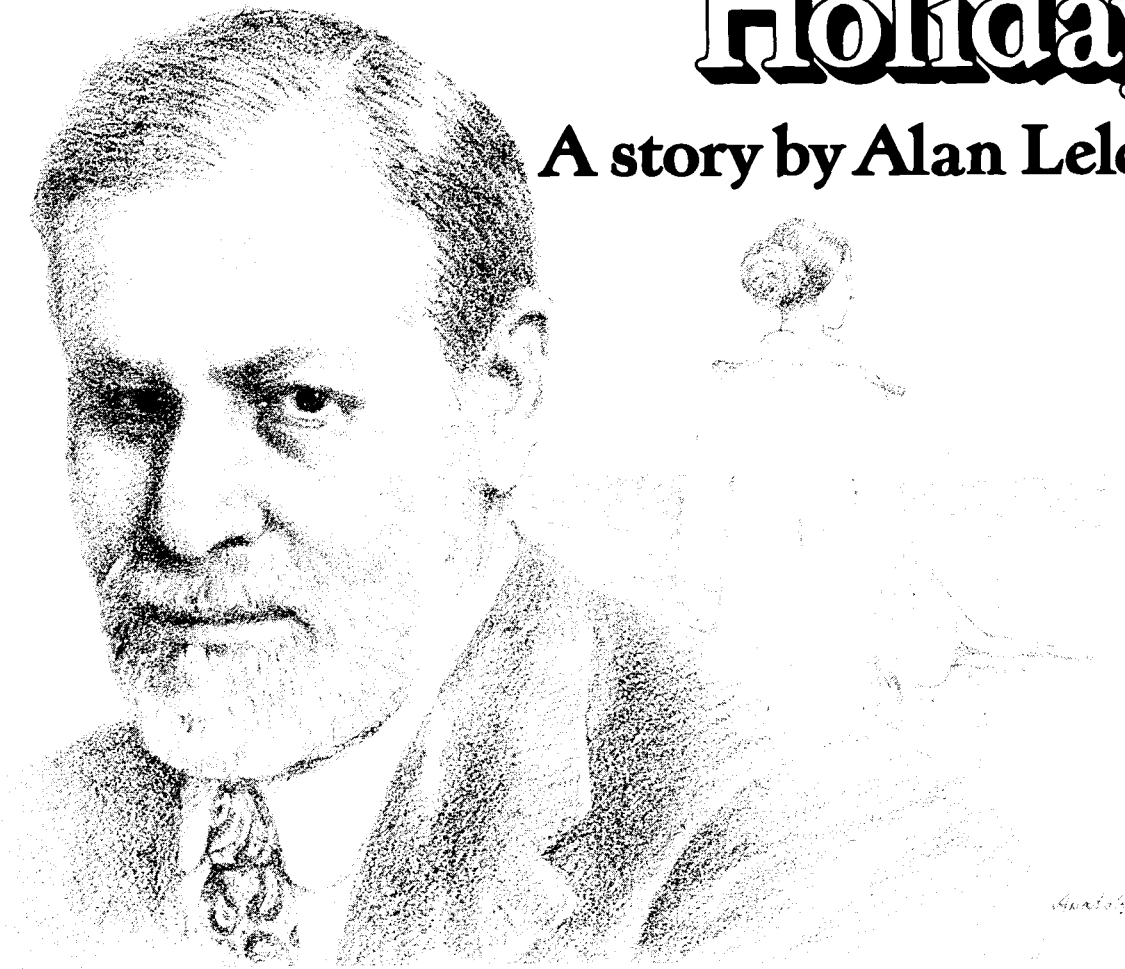
If we compare what needs to be done with what President Reagan is proposing, our economic problems seem certain to be as acute in 1984 as they were in 1980. The centerpiece—a 30 percent across-the-board personal income tax cut—is a triumph of packaging, but it is unlikely to make a substantial difference.

Americans now consume 95 percent of their income and save 5 percent. If their taxes are cut 30 percent, how much will they save? The most likely answer is that they will continue to save 5 percent and spend 95 percent. The net result will be a lot of extra consumption and only a little extra savings. But what we need is a *lot* of extra investment and *no* extra consumption.

If we think seriously about what America would have to do with its tax system or any other part of its economy to cure its problems, one obvious conclusion is that the solutions are “politically unfeasible.” But to accept that conclusion is to accept the idea that America is through as a world economic power. We have to change. □

The Doctor's Holiday

A story by Alan Lelchuk



He sat at the round wicker table and fondled his discovery: a half-woman, half-lion figurine made of terra-cotta, displaying thick lips and a flat nose and large breasts, with a slightly broken tail. The Doctor was excited but confused. What was such an object doing a kilometer from Syracuse? Was it a Roman copy of an African statuette? Or an actual primitive piece retrieved in one of the African campaigns and somehow deposited here in Sicily? He tugged at his trim beard, a gesture often mocked by Minna, and peered beyond the low railing of the porch toward the wide blue sea. Where was she, he wondered, gazing at its shimmering. Was she teasing and playing with him again? The waiter approached, nodded familiarly, and asked in dialect what they wished. Two espressos, the Doctor replied, and

yes, they'd have a look at the pastry today. His Italian being only fair, he helped it with hand gestures. Silvio, the moustached waiter who had served the Doctor for three seasons now, nodded sympathetically at his choice.

The steady breaking of the sea echoed in his ears, and he marveled at the September sirocco. How sensible to vacation now, in this season. But thank God he didn't live here; working on this isle of serenity was nearly impossible. Back at 19 Berggasse, where the sky was mostly steel-gray and the massive eighteenth-century buildings stood like gargoyle sentries, you were driven inside to your study, your work, your patients. The air of Vienna reeked of money and ambition and neurosis, while here, on the Ionian coast, you were perfumed with sea and sky and sunny Italians. Why, even the

white clouds that occasionally formed and drifted by seemed arranged in aesthetic configurations.

The lean gentleman with the firm chin and longish head sat back in his wicker chair and sighed. He turned over the figurine once again, and congratulated his luck. They had been wandering around an out-of-the-way ruin, a few decaying pillars and cornices and fluted columns, when for some reason he had kneeled down on the stubble and started scratching with his small claw hammer. (*Or did you get down on all fours to examine more closely the legs and derrière of Tante Minna? Don't rule that out*, the Doctor cautioned himself.) And just there, suddenly, was the tiny object, trapped between stones and rubble. When it was cleaned, it was in near perfect condition, save for the broken piece of tail. What a surprise addition to his collection. Wait until his daughter saw it; already Anna was becoming a connoisseur of the art, and of his passion for it.

Ah, there *she* was, at last. His lioness. A simple white robe was flung over her bathing suit, revealing, as she walked, her full curves. The deep-set brown eyes flashed recognition from twenty-five meters away, and the taut white skin sparkled from sun and water. In her forties, she still looked like a firm young virgin. Which she was, he realized. Her thick hair was tied up in a bun of sorts. Minna looked less Jewish than her older sister; the nose was straighter and smaller, the complexion fairer, yet, curiously, she felt herself more Jewish than Martha. Attended services on the high holidays. Secretly he liked that old-fashioned quality; somehow it made her more attractive, more primitive. Yes, for him she was a goddess of the sea, at least in his fiery holiday imagination.

Looking more ethereal after a long swim, she approached with her chin high, leaned down, put her arm casually around her brother-in-law's neck, and half-whispered, "Why didn't you come?" using the personal form of "you" in German. "The sea was ravishing!" Then, seeing the object, she took it in her hand—a license he permitted few persons—and chided mockingly, "You mustn't give up *living* for these toys." Running her finger down his prominent nose, she smiled: "Now remember, Herr Professor"—their private joke, since he had been turned down once again for a professorship at the university. No unconverted Jew and sex fiend to boot was going to make it in Vienna medical circles, his old friend and mentor Professor Brücke had told him years ago; for these few decades anyway, he had been proven correct. But there was always a posthumous professorship, the Doctor had quipped.

He stood up to hold her chair but she rejected it,

Alan Lelchuk's most recent novel is *Shrinking*.

saying she wanted to change from her wet suit and have a shower. Smiling, showing fine rows of white teeth, she turned and marched off. Only with her, his Minna, and on these holidays, would he accept such willfulness. Terrible. Tormenting. Touching, too, for both of them.

He returned to the terra-cotta. From his reading he tried to recall which Roman generals had won great campaigns in Africa and returned by way of Syracuse . . . Vespasian? Titus? Hadrian?

His concentration was broken by raised voices a few tables away, an argument in High German. The woman's voice kept growing in pitch, so that the Doctor and others were provoked to look about. The turned heads, however, did nothing to quiet the lady; on the contrary, the sudden audience seemed to inflame her more. By now she was almost screaming, and Mrs. Tommasi, the pension owner, appeared at the door in a cooking apron. The Doctor understood that the woman was accusing her husband of flirting with her sister; but just at that point there was a gasp from the seated guests as the lady passed out, prevented from falling over by the alert waiter. Immediately the dozen guests gathered around her, and the Doctor, against his vacation will, stood up. Tucking his miniature inside his jacket pocket, he proceeded through the small circle, identifying himself as a medical doctor. Once again that day he was kneeling down.

Afterward, when he spoke to her in her room, Mrs. Woolfhausen appeared fine, but, strangely, she barely remembered the incident. A short, handsome lady of forty-six, she explained in a calm voice that something like this had occurred about six months previously, a strange fainting fit which her family doctor had explained away as mere exhaustion. But Mrs. W., wife of a Salzburg manufacturer of military buttons, said she hadn't been exhausted at all. The Doctor, sitting on a straight chair and listening to the lady lying comfortably propped in her bed, began to ask her pointed questions. He sensed that in this solid middle-class frau and her curious fainting spells, he had a potentially valuable patient, one who might contribute seriously—her neurosis, that is—to an old theory that he had been revising but had left off for lack of hard evidence. *If*, of course, she wished to become a patient formally. He stayed with her no more than a half-hour now, excused himself, and left a card, saying he would look in again the next morning.

Back at their table, Minna was waiting, holding out her forefinger as he sat down. "You naughty fellow, deserting me that way."

She wore a white cotton dress, with a décolleté

that showed off her splendid smooth skin, the hint of bosom, the long, glabrous neck.

He sat straight on his chair, opened his pocket-sized soft-bound notebook, and scribbled notes in his tiny but clear handwriting.

"Are you at it again? That's not fair!" Minna half-pouted. "This is holiday time!"

The Doctor looked back at his page. He jotted: "Hysterical fit. Fainting spells, quickly repressed. Irate jealousy. Cycle of periodic attacks." He made a sound with his tongue, thinking how, if his idea held up, this woman might fit nicely into chapter four of his present book, *The Formation of Symptoms*. Of course, he would have to investigate her dreams, too. He half-smiled, recalling the fate of his book on the subject, which had sold its 600 copies in the course of eight years or so and had earned him the grand sum of several hundred marks. While it had received notice in places such as Zurich and Paris and Edinburgh and New York, there had been not a word in Vienna. Not a single response from the prestigious medical world. He felt that, in many ways, the scorn of indifference was far worse than the poison of open abuse. Still, he needed his enemies, didn't he? If he didn't have real enemies, he'd have to invent them, he knew.

"What are you smiling about?" she asked suddenly. "Why, you haven't heard a single thing I've said, have you?"

"Come now, did lioness pick out her pastry yet?" Yes, it was true; when he was considering a matter, idle conversation just floated on by. He always worked well in the company of great chatterers.

She moved her thick lower lip, a semi-mock annoyance familiar enough. "How can I pick one out if *you're* not here?"

"But I am now, my dear," he cooed, waving his hand for Silvio. He blushed slightly at the sound of his own voice, knowing that if any friends or colleagues heard this ridiculous tone, they'd be startled. Only with Minna did the austere Doctor coo. Martha knew this. And Martha knew that he knew it too, didn't she?

The waiter brought over a tray of Mrs. Tommasi's special pastries.

"Hmmm." Minna put her finger to her mouth, deciding. "I think the Doctor will have . . . a Napoleon. And I . . . perhaps a cherry tart?" Her eyes lit up.

The waiter put the pastries on their plates and poured espresso into their demitasse cups. He left the small silver pitcher and departed.

Minna said, "Isn't it lovely to be away from those endless Vienna creams? If one doesn't watch oneself"—she blew out her cheeks and pushed out her bosom—"one turns into a Bavarian milk cow."

The Doctor enjoyed the gesture.

"Look, the sun is just edging toward the horizon, isn't it special?" She took his hand.

He stared at the low sun over the Ionian Sea, and then at the long, delicate eyelashes of Minna. The question was, was this hysteria at bottom, or some other form of disorder? Would it fit in with the old analysis of the Pappenheim lady? Buttons, military buttons. He must write this down, and started to.

She took the pen from him. "You promised. Come, let's try the pastry." She cut a small bite of tart and lifted it to her mouth. Chewing the bite slowly, she licked at her lips with her pink tongue, reaching over to put the pen in his breast pocket. "Don't you dream sometimes of never having to return?"

The Doctor, observing that tongue, those full lips, fantasized for a moment. "The tart. How is it?"

She gazed at him, at the sea. "Only perfect."

The Doctor accepted her coquettishness. Here. Wasn't such charm, such pure charm, what these holidays were intended for? Along with the hunt for antiquities and the need for relaxation? Didn't work hours of eight in the morning till midnight permit such follies once a year? Didn't the two of them play their roles studiously throughout the year, fifty weeks of virtue, say, with only a fortnight for minor mischief? And with the rules of the game remaining fixed, the parts of the play unchanged, they, the players, grew better and better. The Doctor, who hardly ever attended theater, was satisfied with his daydream-directing.

He suggested they have a walk to town before their nap and dinner.

"Perfect idea!" Minna agreed and jumped up.

She took the Doctor's arm, and he led her down from the porch and onto the narrow path away from the sea, toward the village. The cobblestone streets were winding and crooked, and the whitewashed stone houses slanted with age.

Presently they entered the small, tidy town square: a simple Catholic church at one corner, a postcard park with benches, several outdoor cafés. A vendor immediately beckoned to them from an ice stand attached to a horse, and the Doctor stopped and signaled for two cups of Italian ice.

"On top of pastry?"

"Why not? We'll walk it off, and then have a good sleep before dinner."

"How can you keep eating this way?"

"The sea air," he responded, wondering himself at his unusual appetite.

The vendor, with wide-brimmed hat and gold-capped teeth, grinned broadly. "The signore's second honeymoon, perhaps?"

The Doctor raised his eyebrows, and Minna emitted a low laugh. A laugh of satisfaction, provocation?

Sipping the lemon ices, they strolled on.

"Shall we see the church?" She gestured.

"No, no. There's a mass now, and you know what I think of that religion of phony salvation."

"Yes, yes, worse than official Judaism." She recited his litany.

"Come, let's walk through the square and take the sea road back."

He tucked her arm in his, and they promenaded. A local family recognized them and smiled. A few more meters, and from a corner emerged a spiffily dressed middle-aged man supporting two younger women on his arms. He approached and doffed his jaunty hat to the Doctor. "*Buon giorno, Professore!*" he called out, winking broadly at the Doctor, who, passing on, said to Minna, "Dandies and scoundrels grow like wildflowers. Everywhere."

"Oh, don't be such a prig, he's having a good time!" she mocked him. "Sometimes I think you're *against* people having a good time, do you know that?"

"Good times, as you call them, are not always what they seem to be," he retorted seriously.

The street soon vanished, giving way to a narrow stone and pebble path that wound its way toward the sea like a ribbon of intuition. The crunching sound of the pebbly underfooting pleased the Doctor, reminding him of early days by the seashore with his mother. Delicious days. Before them now, the Ionian Sea stretched wide in verdigris to the fine line of distant horizon. They walked along, hand in hand, tasting and smelling the salt air, reflecting separately. *Was* this perhaps a second honeymoon? he pondered.

Half to herself, half aloud, Minna mused, "Nothing ever changes, does it?"

The Doctor prepared to answer wittily. He reconsidered after replaying the question, for he thought he sensed in this simple musing all of Minna's sharpest yearning, a yearning of years, a yearning dating back to her fiancé's premature death decades ago, and it broke his heart now. "Nothing ever changes, does it?" repeated itself in the air, in his consciousness, and in this phrase was summed up her—their—terrible situation. The Doctor, noted for his brutal honesty, kept silent, unable to lie; noted for his stone will and imperviousness, he felt his heart shake. He allowed, for a moment only, the luxury of belief in a honeymoon, his second and her first, this girl who had been robbed of one, and the thought lifted his spirit passionately! Yes, now, some twenty-five years later, he'd stand in for her fiancé, his friend Schönberg; and the murmuring lyrical sea lifted him with emotion. A protruding stone almost tripped him, however, and he returned to reality, *the* reality—namely, that he was married to her older sister, and that once upon a time he had loved Martha too with a youthful passion and had always

been devoted to her. Toward this devotion he now turned himself anew, steadfastly, like a captain of a ship resolved upon his fixed course of duty despite a provocative deviation. And Minna's remark, the inchoate thought, the keen yearning, grew thinner and softer and less audible, until it was dissolved in the roar of the sea and the climbing wind.

Much later, after dinner. Ten thirty. In Minna's room, the Doctor is bidding good-night. It is a smallish room painted white, with the double bed taking up most of the space, beside a vanity table and mirror. He notes her cheeks, reddened now from the wine, and feels the late hour in her bedroom tingle his blood. She wears a canary-yellow dress, newly fashioned to reveal calves; a thin, pale gold necklace is around her neck, the locket reaching down upon her chest (holding the photograph of her and Schönberg); her hair is tied up in a serpent braid. Now, facing the mirror, she catches his eye. "Won't you help unbutton me?" She fixes her brown eyes upon his. "Perhaps remove the necklace too?" He hasn't expected this, wishes he could say no. "No," he practices privately, "I can't," while taking a step closer, smelling the faint odor of musk. "Wait just one moment," she directs, and for some reason begins taking pins from her hair, one, two, three, four—"Rilke is lyrical, but as you would put it, he sublimates too much, don't you think?"—but he can't answer, transfixed. Thick twisted braids of hair fall, and he tries to depart, to budge, but stands immobile. Tries to concentrate on the rush of the sea, on the landscape with cow on the wall, but is hypnotized as she shakes out her hair, a light-brown thick mane that falls and brushes his face, burning him with desire and dim memory (his mother's hair?). His hands are at his sides, weak. She catches and imprisons his gaze again, in the mirror. "You may begin now," she suggests, low. Begin? The Doctor, bewildered, hot, chest agitated, reaches out and unhooks the clasp and opens the white wooden buttons down to the small of her back, a journey to a taboo territory. Underneath, she wears a white silk camisole. "You'll have to come closer to get the necklace," she advises. Closer he comes, a faithful servant, growing dizzier by the millimeter and as dazed as when he had sniffed cocaine. He tries to work with his fingers alone, out there, but she laughs in mild derision. He bends his hot face closer, in order to sight the tiny loops of the gold chain. His long fingernails are unable quite to pick it open, it seems. He is lingering, by her skin, by the soft down of her neck, by her long precious swan's neck. Just then she runs her pianist's hands back up her neck, ostensibly to catch the strands of her hair; but the gesture only insures the opposite, the falling of

thick hair upon *his* hands. Hair that acts like her hips, tormenting him. The Doctor breathes deeply, a man lost and hypnotized by hair, smell, neck; he is on the verge of crossing a barrier. Fixed there, he feels desire congeal his heart, confuse his balance. One centimeter away and new worlds beckon and open. At last he breaks the excruciating spell, undoes the clasp, and, without looking at her, walks to the door, where he bids her a quick good-night and departs.

Soon, in his bed, he picks up his *Don Quixote*, reading it for the second time, now in Spanish. But much as he tries to concentrate on his favorite story, the pages pass and the sense is lost.

That night, he dreams unruly dreams. In the chief dream, he is a passenger in a horse-drawn carriage, listening to the galloping thuds of the horses and the loud clanging of the wheels, surrounded in his coach by strangers. These well-dressed citizens eye him suspiciously for some reason. Gradually the speed of the ride increases. Afraid, late for a crucial lecture to the Vienna Academy of Sciences, he looks up and out and notices that the driver is nowhere to be found and the horses are running wildly. He grows terrified, and tries to climb from the coach onto the abandoned driver's seat. In the effort, his waistcoat and trousers are torn, and he is disheveled. The passengers meanwhile are sitting calmly, glancing at him over their newspapers with undisguised scorn. Is he delirious? Inventing all this? Finally he manages, out of breath, to ascend to the lofty seat above. Once there he can't find the reins, however. He looks about frantically as the carriage rolls and rocks precariously on the narrow path by the sea. The blood-red disc of sun is splotched upon the sky, the wind is blowing wildly, and now he realizes that he has lost his necktie and a piece of his shirt, and his vest is dirty. The passengers peek out from the coach to stare at the maddened Doctor, now attempting to be the driver, and to rebuke him for causing all this trouble. But what has he done?

At last he spots the reins, caught between the horses. But it is no use, he can never jump down there to retrieve them. Not while the horses are racing at full speed. No use! He sinks into his seat, feeling forlorn and helpless, while the speed and beauty of the animals attract and terrify him. He notes the bulging flanks, the powerful torsos, and the thick manes of light-brown hair flying, and he stands, drawn irresistibly and unreasonably to that long mane of brown hair . . . He awakes in a fright, dazed, half out of the bed, his heart racing furiously. Takes a full two minutes to catch his breath. Turns on the bedside lamp, and immediately jots down the surface details of the dream. Is a

migraine beginning? he wonders, lying back down on his thick pillow, breathing deeply still. A strange sound. Is that Minna groaning on the other side of the thin wall? Is this a mirage, a self-projection, a dream of her own?

He feels the cool breeze and pulls the quilt higher. The sea crashes, and the Doctor can't sleep.

Shifter's butcher shop, across the street at 27 Berggasse, was still open, he saw, and he asked Martha if perhaps they could get some lamb chops. Sandor, his guest for dinner, loved them dearly, but couldn't ever afford them in his Budapest. Martha agreed it would be a nice surprise for Sandor, and with the day maid already gone, she would shop herself. The Doctor pecked Martha on the cheek and returned to his study where, at ten minutes to six, he had a break between patients. His mouth and jaw had once again developed that odd evening throb, and he vowed to attend to it, as his daughter kept telling him. Yet another cut from nature, to go with his assortment of wounds. He moseyed over to the long library table filled with primitive objects and gods and picked up his most recent find. He had assessed that it might have come from a North African campaign of Caesar's, about A.D. 46, when with a single word, "*Quirites*," he had quieted the revolt of his favorite legion, the Tenth. (Yet, when his dear colleague Jones had once hailed the Doctor as their Caesar, in a celebration, the Doctor had shaken his head and said, to their surprise, "I prefer Hannibal.") Evidence indicated, according to Suetonius, that Caesar had come back by way of Syracuse. The brown figurine was a useful contrast to the Doctor's other pieces, the alabaster Roman and the earth-colored Egyptian antiquities.

Twisting his jaw from side to side in an improvised massage he had worked out, he returned to his busy, somewhat disordered desk. (His unfinished paper on hysteria lay in one corner, raised now to the top of the pile of incompletes. Warily he took out his notes on the next—and last—two patients of the day, the new patient whom he had met at the pension and the young American doctor from a place called Worcester, Massachusetts. God, how did they ever pronounce those names! Clearly he needed his second cup of evening tea. Ten minutes to go before the appointment hour, so he went to his doorway and rang a bell. It was his daughter who turned up, however. "*Liebschen*," he said, smoothing her pale cheek with his hand, "would you be so good as to bring me a cup of tea? And where's Minna? We're breaking down, I'm afraid." Anna laughed at his joke, and immediately did his bidding. That frail, brilliant creature; what would he do without her? Or Minna? Or Martha? It was that

whole family of females who made his fourteen- to sixteen-hour workday possible, they who made the steady rounds of sarcasm from peers and government officials bearable, they who enabled him to tolerate the constant betrayals of male friends and students. This abundant family performed the small conveniences of everyday life with warmth and kindness, without which, he was convinced, serious projects would never get done. He returned to his study, where he spent much too little time because of the increase of patients. There were either too few patients and not enough money, or too many patients and not enough time for research and writing.

Daughter brought in the tea in his thick glass with a metal band, on a saucer, and she inquired about his mouth and jaw. Thoughtful girl. To her, to whom he told everything—well, not quite, perhaps—he explained that the pain had flared up again. “You’ll see Hajeck next month, then?” The Doctor agreed to see his old acquaintance, now a foremost rhinologist, and meanwhile asked Anna for one of her special jaw massages later on.

He sipped his tea, picked up his notebook, adjusted his reading glasses. “Fainting spells since age thirty-five. Deep attachment to father, unresolved Oed. complex. Long-term memory repressed. Early possible trauma related to abuse by mother? Transferred to son now?”

Mrs. W. presented herself in his small treatment room, wearing a Tyrolean hat with a red feather and an expensive linen suit. He helped her off with her coat, asked her please to take her place on the divan, and he sat in his old upholstered chair behind her, out of sight. He felt fatigued, and looked dully at the battered Persian carpet covering the chaise longue. But then, hearing her high voice murmuring some opening politeness, he perked up at the prospect of encountering this lady and her fainting spells, as mysterious and revealing in their way as his little demigods. Actual evidence seemed to charge his energy and clear his head, motivating his evening’s writing. He began: “So, how has your week been?” allowing the middle-class frau to answer and to wander in free association over her days and nights, with the Doctor guiding her at some point in a specific direction.

At the end of the fifty-minute hour he returned directly to his desk, quietly excited. His brain pumped with the data and drama just presented: her dreams of her father and, further, her anguished memory of a summer scene in which she had seen the forbidden—her father in a compromising position with her aunt. At this point she had blacked out momentarily; right there in his office she had collapsed at the prospect of turning the key into that locked and forbidden room! This confirmed for the Doctor the importance of the early trauma in the lives of hysterics.

He was still scribbling furiously when the call came, from Daughter, that Dr. Eugene Scott was waiting; had he forgotten? Yes, in the throes of his excitement he had. God. He jumped up, adjusted his necktie perfunctorily, and hurried into the tiny waiting room, where the handsome young American with the fragile smile and solid neurosis was standing. As the Doctor escorted the younger man into the treatment room, he thought what a curious case this was, a kind of borderline schizophrenia. Whereupon he wondered if that quick description might not after all be turned into a serious category of disorder after some investigation? Intriguing idea. Yes, he was humming tonight, as he sat down and wrote out the improvised category. . .

When at the last minute Sandor called to cancel after all, the Doctor, normally furious at such broken engagements, forgave. Poor Sandor needed a deep analysis badly; he had a hard enough time just keeping up with his own disturbed personality, let alone with life. So the Doctor joined his six children and two women for dinner, eating the lamb chops and feeling slightly guilty. Martha asked what he thought of the vague talk about world war, and the Doctor replied that mankind would one day destroy itself if left on its present course, just as his patients did individually. “There you go, generalizing grandly, *and* being pessimistic,” chided Minna. “Shame on you.” The Doctor accepted the criticism, and silenced his pessimism.

Afterward, the children studied in their bedrooms, while in the sitting room Martha sewed and Minna read Balzac. Periodically the Doctor passed through, on absorbed peregrinations to and from his study. Writing there at night, he felt his mind cleared of the day’s dross and open for essentials. Finally, at about ten o’clock, when Martha asked the Doctor if they could perhaps take a late walk, he thought it was a splendid idea. But Minna, curled in her throne chair, declined, urging them to go alone. Directly Martha stood up and walked across the room, and in a gesture of maternal determination took the book out of Minna’s hands, admonishing, “You read too much. Besides, the fresh air would do you more good than these *Illusions Perdues*, whatever they may be.” Minna took her older sister’s hand. Martha leaned and kissed her affectionately. “The French are always cynical, it’s what passes for their sophistication, isn’t it? Awful!”

The Doctor beamed at his wife’s thoughtfulness and the warm sisterly love.

Outside, the evening was fragrant with the air of late September. His wife on one arm and sister-in-law on the other, the Doctor proceeded down the Berggasse and headed for the tree-lined streets leading to the opera house. They passed Kahlenberg and Beethoven-gang, quite lovely with the absence of parading citizens.

"Now, aren't you glad we dragged you along?" prodded Martha.

"I'm glad you dragged my sweater along with me," Minna replied.

"Chilly, isn't it?" concurred the Doctor. "Walk briskly, it's better for you," and he kept up a sturdy pace.

Presently huge leafy trees engulfed them, making a high canopy beneath the night sky. By a giant European beech, Minna halted. "Look. Do you remember?"

"Of course," said Martha, "how could we forget? How many years ago was that?"

The Doctor, precise as ever, recalled: "Twenty-three."

"My, we're getting old," commented Minna wistfully, caressing the huge, smooth gray trunk.

The Doctor remembered the oath of allegiance sworn by them when a quartet. He wanted to take her hand, but didn't. The lean face of the missing fourth, her suitor, bent over his Sanskrit, returned to the Doctor.

It was Martha who took Minna's hand. "Don't be silly. Old is a frame of mind, that's all. And look at this tree—doesn't it look handsomer with age?"

Minna stayed at the smooth silvery bark, walking around the vast trunk and holding it as if it were a maypole. "Oh, yes," she acknowledged plaintively, "it gets more and more . . . ravishing."

The Doctor noted the adjective, and waited until she had made two loops around the massive tree. The breeze rustled the leaves, and the Doctor scratched behind his ear anxiously.

"Shall we move on, dear?" offered Martha, circling her sister's girlish waist.

Reluctantly, Minna acquiesced, and the three proceeded. Martha, to her credit, brought up the autumn weather in faraway New England while maneuvering her sister into the middle position. "Siggy's been invited to lecture there, you know," she advised, chatting on about the changing colors of the trees. The morning energy of Minna had now vanished, replaced by an aura of wounding and loss. The sparkling ingenue was now a bereaved spinster in her forties, leeches by past loss and depleted by present incompleteness. Privately, they all remembered the suitor who had died prematurely of pulmonary tuberculosis. So they walked along, the ladies attired in white, like three characters in a British play (imagined the Doctor) astray in Vienna.

The Doctor, moved, trudged on with sturdy step.

Minna, the wounded doe, let herself be carried along.

Martha, who understood and accepted everything, kept up her commentary about autumn in a distant place, a distant time.

In a half-hour they were back home, and after Minna had gone off to her room, Martha undressed while the Doctor brushed his teeth. She called out softly to him, "After her holidays she always seems a bit depressed. Be a dear and have a look in on her? Tonight was difficult."

"Don't you think she's quite all right? Needful of her rest?"

Martha turned now and asked for her husband's help in unfastening her dress. Looking in the long narrow mirror at him, she said in her low voice, "Oh, I think she'd appreciate your looking in on her, dearest."

The Doctor felt congested, confused. He moved away from his lovely wife and returned to the washbasin, where he rinsed his mouth. He put his toothbrush down and said to his wife, "Don't you think *you* ought to have the look-in?"

She came to his side, kissed him on the cheek, and looked at her husband of nearly twenty-four years with her mobile hazel eyes. She shook her head slowly, and seemed to smile.

His legs felt feeble. What was Martha asking? Or he imagining? And just now, in staring at him and shaking her head and saying, "You," she had never looked more heroic, more beautiful. Yes, a hundred times yes, she warranted every bit of his devotion and loyalty!

The Doctor found himself rebuttoning his shirt, and started to tie his necktie. But Martha took it from him, laughing. "Come now, you're not invited to give a lecture," she chided. "This is a family matter."

The Doctor, so familiar with authority and power, the one feeding the other, now walked weakly out of the room, his wife's words and (suggestive?) smile in his head. And where was he going, on what errand had she really sent him?

During the next few dozen steps, across the living room and through the darkened vestibule, the Doctor reaffirmed what he had always known and always had confirmed for him by others: how secrecy was all in human lives. There were rings and concentric rings of secret truths, which made even misery tolerable.

He knocked on Minna's door. No answer.

He looked about, saw the dark mahogany panels, no children, and knocked again. No answer.

Could she really be asleep already? Quite possible, with certain defense mechanisms. Just then he believed he heard something, leaned down, and found himself on his knees. A wisp of light shone through the crack in the door. Leaning his ear close, he wondered if that sound was crying? Quickly he glanced about, noticing nothing, however, except his curious position on all fours. "*Quirites*" jumped into his mind for some reason. Why?

Carefully he raised himself, his knees cracking; he had a sense now of the comedy of romantic affairs, the

full comedy and exalted seriousness of those affairs. The knight errant knocked again quietly; there was no answer. He turned the knob and the door opened. Nervously he entered.

A porcelain lamp threw a circle of light upon the double canopied bed, an engagement present from Martha and the Doctor. An open book was lying on one pillow, and on the other, face buried, was Minna, crying. Evidently she thought it was Martha who had come in, as had occurred in the past, and she didn't want to turn to face her sister. What could the Doctor do? She was lying half out of the covers, in her white nightgown of summer, her silky behind protruding toward him, her whole torso quivering from her anguish. The Doctor felt a rush of confusing feelings, solicitude and paternal affection camouflaging other, more primitive emotions. The moment expanded in its ambiguity, like a star gaining in magnitude, and the Doctor, who had dimly pictured this moment in his fantasy life, was stalled now that it was real. On what should he act? On moral principles? On his own knowledge of the nature of repression? On crude instinct? (Where was his?) Oh, the comedy grew and grew, he sensed, while beads of perspiration covered his forehead.

She turned about slowly at this point, her thick brown hair wild, her eyes swollen, and she gazed at him as if he were a phantom—perhaps one from her own dreams or fantasies? Only then, as he was about to speak, did he sense that her stare was not confined to his eyes but had shifted to his lower parts, where his member had grown stiff with interest. His usual fierce determination curbed by embarrassment and confusion, the Doctor stood there helpless, faintly trying to shield his unruly part.

Minna, more lovely than ever in her flush of surprise, in her fullness of exposure, reached out her arms toward him. The Doctor, in weakness, accepted them, but only enough to sit on the bed near her. She took him to her full bosom and began to rock him, calling him her Siggy, stroking his neck and scalp, his "Achilles scalp." And the Doctor, who had entered in order to succor, now found himself on the receiving end, nuzzling closer to her fine skin and body smell, to be succored.

The clock high on the wall ticked, neither of them spoke, and she continued to hold him and rock him. The Doctor wasn't sure if it was her rocking that edged him closer to her loose breasts or if he did it on his own (in later years he would imagine that it was *his* doing); but presently he felt a breast against his face, and he seemed to be pinned there, and he pressed her to him, hoping she would see the paternalism of his position. Did she? Did he open his mouth and bite, as he wished? Did he merely nuzzle? In any case, in a min-

ute or two or ten, in the deceptive eternity of passion, he felt terribly excited as he smelled a new odor coming from Minna. And the Doctor, against his will, suddenly squeezed her to him tightly, feeling his unwanted rush of pleasure, and whispering at that moment, "There, there, Minna darling, it will be all right . . . all right." Minna sighed and said his name, whispered his name and said something that he couldn't understand, and they stayed locked for a good long while, her thick hair falling on his beard and face, her smell upon him, his wetness spreading upon him. Time passed as the old clock ticked, as the silence swept up through the room, and when he opened one eye, he sighted the framed photograph of her doomed fiancé. Was his old friend eyeing him now with accusation or approval?

At last, somehow, he disentangled himself, kissed her on the cheek, and as quietly as possible left the room and returned to his end of the flat.

He knew that if he dared to take a full bath now, as he wanted, Martha would awaken and wonder. So he patted his face and neck quickly with a damp washcloth, muttering to himself.

How stupid and silly it all was! How comic he must have looked from his intoxication. How much he needed his own sessions! In order to . . . to what? To pull himself up—to where? Did he want to leave Martha, for example? Of course not. Did he want to permit himself the indulgence of an open dalliance with his sister-in-law? No. He was not a bohemian or a scoundrel. To disappoint two hearts, two loyalties, for the sake of his own needs was not his way. So what did one—he—do? Why, nothing. Nothing right now. Go on. And try his best *not* to relate his own special predicament to his theories and therapies.

Oh, but you would, you would! You must. Of this he was certain, to his regret.

At last he dropped into his own bed, the plain mahogany four-poster. In her half-sleep Martha instinctively turned to him, and drowsily asked if Minna was feeling better. The Doctor, holding his wife in the crook of his arm, said yes, she was, a little. Martha nodded briefly into his chest.

The Doctor stared at the circling shadows, wondering about his rest.

After another moment, Martha draped an arm over his stomach, apparently in her sleep. Unused to this, the Doctor immediately grew alert. When her hand moved he wanted her to stop, but didn't wish to wake her or arouse her suspicion at all. So he allowed her, whether she was asleep or whatever.

To his further surprise, she moved her hand lightly upon him, across his pubic area, through the stiff hairs, and then, as if satisfied, she rested.

The Doctor, eased somewhat, remained perplexed. He tried not to budge.

Yet after a few silent moments of apparent sleep, Martha uttered, "I'm glad she's better." She kissed his narrow chest tenderly, adding something . . . inaudible. What was it, he wondered? Something about his comforting Minna from now on? He couldn't believe his ears, his interpretation! He wanted desperately to ask her to repeat the words, but didn't dare. What was she meaning, this woman whom he had known, or thought he had known, for most of his adult life? Did she believe that indeed they had had coition? And was this what Martha, quiet, all-knowing Martha, had wanted all along for her sister and her husband? Or was he inventing, projecting?

Further: is this what the Doctor should have engaged in, after all, through the years, for the sake of all those concerned and all of their wishes? And was she asking for—no, encouraging—such a family ménage for them? For the sake of loyalty, generosity, love? Was she advising the simplest of therapies for this most complex of situations? The purest of pleasures for this most complex man?

The Doctor lay there, rotating his jaw on his feathered pillow, alert, befuddled, astonished. The evening had proceeded in a string of surprises in which he, the professional viewer, was suddenly an actor playing a new part, while his wife, usually a secondary player, had suddenly turned director. More, he wondered: Were the two women in secret collusion, deep, unconscious collusion, each one seeking to supply the other with love by means of him, the loved one? And was all this chaos and madness going on here, right under his own roof, where order was naturally the highest good?

What an improbable night—would it ever end?

It would, but not just yet. And what happened next he was never quite sure of, then or later, in part because of the strange evening, the lateness of the hour, his own drowsiness and nerves.

Presently, while he contemplated his naiveté and innocence, even now in his fifties, his wife seemed restless, and in turning brushed him uncharacteristically. A model of timidity and decorum in their bed, Martha now seemed to be touching the Doctor with curious hands and caresses, in a kind of somnolent wanting. Was she sick, was he imagining this? For nearly twenty-five years she had not acted this way—perhaps once, just after they were married—and here she was, *acting*. In any case, the Doctor was unsettled at being invaded, now in particular; and for the first time that he could remember, he grew angry with his wife, in bed no less! Rather roughly he began to shake her off, push her away, surprised by himself as much as by her. Whereupon Martha reacted in kind, intensify-

ing instead of abandoning, proceeding even to the point of what sounded like a moan, rare from her; yet he had just heard a different moan in a different room, and the vision of that other woman, lying in bed with her night-gowned bottom shaking, rose in his mind. This image rose and flourished in his mind, and the Doctor felt his anger slide imperceptibly into desire, convert itself into something like revenge-lust, and thus pursued, he pressed upon his wife; surprised, he surprised her.

Oh, how little he still knew about the mysterious life of the senses, which, once you found the right key, opened the whole world of the inner life. Yes, how little he knew, he sensed now, probing and driving ahead, about harnessed energy and its complicated anatomy, which he had studied only from afar, writing about it from evidence given by others mostly, not from his own life. What a naïf. But here, now, in the shadows, in the sheets, seeing his *Dulcinea*, Minna-in-Martha and Martha-in-Minna, he felt renewed as if he were on a second holiday, a Don in Vienna; felt innocent and youthful; felt creeping old age and crippling passivity dissolve. For now, in the transfigurations of night, Martha's groaning was like Minna's whispering, and he surged forward with control as if this were a strange young virgin and he a lean young male. So he and Martha were turned into strangers of sorts. These two women fused irresistibly in his heart and senses, they together had fired his id, and here at last he knew lust in his conjugal bed. And for the second time that night he was losing himself, dissolving his analytic ego self and discovering a new driving force within.

Later, Martha was snoring, fast asleep. The Doctor, however, was wide awake, but now not from insomnia. He who had always looked upon his own sexuality as a force for reproduction and some pleasure now had new evidence to examine. An occasional carriage clopped and clanged through the silent night. Too alert to sleep, assaulted by inquiries and wild ideas, the Doctor finally eased out of bed, put on his bathrobe, and headed for his study. Inside, he closed the door and pulled the chain on the small lamp. It had been a long time since he had come in here this late, 1:40 A.M., and never from any personal issues. Distracted, he stood by the library table, covered with thick brocade, on which lay his collection of antiquities. He picked up one and then another of these ancient figurines and gods, these voices from the past, wondering vaguely what the connections were between these primitive artifacts and his own confusing, primitive drives. Taking two of the figures in his hands and, looking about, he walked the few steps to the chaise reserved for his patients. Quite naturally he lay down there, something he hadn't done in years.

Ah, it was easier here, on this curved incline, his

head resting upon a fresh doily. Easier here to remember all, to seek the forgotten and censored and obscure. Easier here to be the sick and willing patient rather than the omnipotent doctor. Yes, yes, the comfort of the couch was far preferable to the pressure of the examining chair. And the Doctor, who that night had been upended by a tornado of swirling emotions, surprised by a surge of youthful power—what about his self-proclaimed illnesses all those years, mere hypochondria? The Doctor perceived how many more unknown levels remained in the inner life and how arduous the archaeology became once he switched from observer to laborer. No, no, no: to resist present pleasures for longer-term knowledge, to exchange sensuality for science, that was the necessary gambit. A self-denial familiar enough. Beyond his closed eyes lay the comfort of the low light, the ordered silence of the night.

He lay there, turning these thoughts on his mind's lathe, fondling his pieces like children's toys. Gradually, slowly, between drowsiness and wakefulness, he saw what he needed to do now, most of all: to dig down further within. A most difficult dig, he knew. To continue his own private analysis, begun over ten years ago, but with another layer now discovered on the site. For who had time or energy for *living*, for seriously experiencing, as well as for examining and writing? Could he do it alone? Mother, will you help me? Minna, Martha, Memory? Was he falling apart, chancing a leap that might undo him in the end?

The Doctor, who knew that his talent lay in great measure in his tenacity, in his ability to see through to the end any and every challenge, held on tighter to his primitives, squeezed them in his resolve to face his own murky predicament and self-trial. Squeezed so hard, in his force of purpose, that he did what centuries had not done: he broke their limbs. Shaken from his trance, he bolted upright, and when he saw what he had done in the dim light tears came to his eyes. Pieces of jagged terra-cotta and alabaster were on his lap and chaise. He recalled the moment when his mother said they had come from earth and would return to earth, and he, already a skeptic at age six, saw his mother rub her hands together and offer him tiny fragments of epidermis. He was warned then of the inevitable. Another jolt of memory: marching into his parents' bedroom at age seven and deliberately urinating on the floor. Yes, he'd show them, he remembered feeling. And Father's amazement, saying, "That boy will never amount to anything." The Doctor was not shocked at the memory now; in fact, he felt confirmed by that extreme display of early determination. He had aspired to emulate his boyhood hero, Hannibal, who would have his vengeance on the Romans no matter what. So too, in his martial field of medicine, the Doctor would take his

vengeance on the Viennese. With their anti-intellectualism, anti-psychoanalysis, anti-Semitism, they were his Romans and he *needed* them. Nodding to himself, he reached out for his notebook and jotted down the two sudden strikes of memory. Fully awake now, he cleared the broken pieces and rose up, no longer fatigued. At his desk, he placed the notebook prominently and took out his larger file of notes for a self-analysis.

Meticulously he smoothed out the chaise, freshened the doily, gathered the shattered fragments into a small wicker basket for repair, and turned out the light. Though not solving the dilemma of the evening, or even interpreting it at all, he had perhaps accomplished something else: located a battlefield and a method of attack. The turmoil of his new experience had rejuvenated his project for the next several years. His watch showed at least two hours before dawn, enough to catch some sleep perhaps. Delicious Minna, heroic Martha—each had in her separate way shoved him down through yet another surprise chute, this one to the darkest depth yet. As always he'd go it alone, all alone, looking for hints here and clues there, using painstaking memory, dusty facts and worn photographs, insomniac hours and patients' stories. And yes, he concluded, if he had to "comfort" Minna yet again, at Martha's suggestion perhaps, that too would aid his search, spark intuition. For in that closed arena of family affairs, where authority was subtly mocked and overthrown, where his superego guard was down, he could play a favorite role again: the pupil.

Presently, back in his bedroom, he settled into eider-down, accepting that he would approach wisdom not by reason alone, but by luck, drive, tenacity, intuition. By creeping where he shouldn't. The Doctor pulled up the light blanket, knowing that for the next few years, anyway, he'd be a patient again, one side of him linked to the other in a symbiotic union of opposites. Meanwhile another mate, Martha, snuggled closer. Could he play both roles without splitting apart? But consider, Hannibal had tried the impossible and had made the crossing. Then so would he, if not through the Alps, then through his life's innermost secrets, aided by the memory of his mother's unending belief in him, that power reincarnated now in these women.

Part son, part father, part little god, this patient-adventurer, his journey fixed, at last sought sleep. His lips moved as he smelled the faint sexual odor, and for some reason the motto from Virgil's *Aeneid* came to his head: *Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo*. "If I cannot bend the gods above, then I will move the infernal regions." And he knew that for these infernal regions, he was now, more than ever, equipped. □

LIFE & LETTERS



TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF ACCIDENTAL KNOTS

by William Allen

One night a few weeks ago my bird-bath caught on fire, and when I ran with what I thought was a neatly coiled hose to put out the blaze, I was yanked up hopelessly short. I looked back and the hose had six knots in it. All those knots appearing just like that seemed impossible, to say nothing of unjust, and it set off something in me that had been brewing for a long time. It made me decide that I was going to unravel forever the mystery surrounding what amounts to half a lifetime of accidental knots.

As a child I thought that any knots in my life must somehow be my fault. Back then I also noticed that knots I wanted tied often wouldn't stay tied—or they turned into knots totally unsuited to my purpose. Later, though I

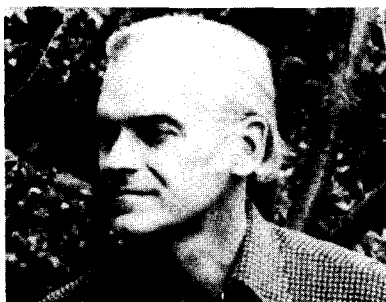
March report on

**ATLANTIC MONTHLY
PRESS BOOKS**



LESLIE NORRIS (above), a Welshman who now lives in Sussex, has a lyric gift that appeals to Americans. He teaches, from time to time, at the University of Washington, and he writes fiction as well as poetry. His new poems form three collections in one volume, **WALKING THE WHITE FIELDS**.

DAVID WAGONER (below), an Ohioan who moved to the Pacific Northwest long ago, has a style that is making itself familiar to easterly Americans. He has long taught at the University of Washington, and is the author of many novels, many poems. His new collection is **LANDFALL**.



Wagoner's characteristic mode is one of exploring, deeper into woods, farther over water. "To read him," as X. J. Kennedy has said, "is to live in a larger world." Norris watches for the inner illumination from people, places, landscapes. **WALKING THE WHITE FIELDS**, Richard Wilbur has said, is "an admirable book, the real thing, full of virtues which I had feared were slipping away from us."

WALKING THE WHITE FIELDS
by Leslie Norris
\$9.95 hardcover; \$5.95 paperback

LANDFALL
by David Wagoner
\$9.95 hardcover; \$5.95 paperback

LITTLE, BROWN

stopped taking the blame for knots, I still hadn't learned how they worked, the way I was sure other people had. Every time I found a knot where I didn't think there should be one, it troubled me. My phone cord has always been in a snarl—I'm used to that—but when it knotted around the stem of my empty wineglass during the night, I needed to know why. Before I died, I wanted to know why the once straight cord to the toaster on my kitchen counter became so knotted that it pulled the appliance up under the cupboard where it was useless, and finally one day caused the toaster to blow up.

I had always assumed a knot required that the end of something be free to go through a loop and then get pulled tight. This assumption was based on the way I had tied knots; but if I was correct, my problem with knots shouldn't exist. If you hold kite string at one end and tie it to a kite at the other, those enormous, hopeless clumps should never develop—especially if the carefully tied knots in the tail are always going to fall loose.

If this seems like a minor issue, let me say that almost everyone I have asked about knots agrees that they are mysterious and need to be better understood. These people also say that my initial conception of a knot ought to be right.

Now, I'm sure that somewhere, in some obscure treatise on some remote library shelf, the answer lies waiting. Sailors and mountain climbers and window washers—or anyone else who depends on the control of knots—certainly must know more than the average person. The cowboys who continually fool with their ropes in movies and rodeos must do so with understanding and purpose. Rope designers and rope makers must know almost everything about knots. But the information has never reached me—and apparently never reached a good many other people as well. What I am about to tell you, then, I have learned on my own.

First, I bought ten feet of common manila rope, tossed it on the middle of the floor, and just watched it for a while. It didn't move, which didn't surprise me, so I left it there overnight.

Next morning I realized that, even though the rope hadn't moved, it looked tangled. I picked up the tangle and, sure enough, it didn't snake out into my ten-foot length of straight manila rope, the way it should have. It came up in a clump. I tried to shake loose the clump,

then pulled on the ends to free it, but this only made it worse. What I had was a tightly tangled mess that required considerable effort to undo.

The rope hadn't been tangled when I bought it, or before I tossed it to the floor, but somehow the *act of tossing* had caused it to converge on itself. It had happened right in front of me, but I hadn't observed it until the next day—which made me aware that, so far, I was bringing an untrained eye to my task.

It became clear that the act of moving the rope in the slightest way tended to cause it to knot. But why? I inspected it more closely. It consisted of three smaller pieces of rope tightly twisted around each other, all with little clinging hemp burrs sticking out of them. Each of the three pieces was made of long, single strands of hemp twisted around each other. When I took it apart, it wanted to kink back up—as if the rope depended on knottiness to exist.

I noticed that if I tossed the rope in the air, freeing it from the force of gravity for a moment, the rope's inherent forces came into play. All the twisting that had gone into the making of the rope had created internal dynamics which made it seek to converge on itself, to continue to twine around itself—most obviously in the form of loops. And a few loops could form a support for yet more rope to gather and wrap around itself. Any collective movement of the rope—any pulling, for instance—made the loops smaller and the tangles tighter. Eventually all this movement was likely to result in a real knot. The bend of a loop, if tight enough, could constitute that free end I originally felt necessary to the creation of a knot.

So now I postulated: *Given the opportunity, a length of something with an end or a substitute end will, in general, tangle rather than stay straight.*

But this only formulated the mystery, it didn't solve it. I recently ordered a martini with a twist and noticed that the lemon peel was unusually long, looking like a little yellow snake in my gin. Before the drink was gone, that twist had turned itself into a knot. At this moment, the cord to my desk lamp has a knot in it. (Some people would have plugged it in like that, of course, but I never would.) A couple of years ago I went to great lengths to make sure that the cords running to my new stereo speakers were straight. Now

they're snarled and knotted to the point where the little wires inside are broken, causing static when I walk across the living room floor. And then I've got that problem with the vacuum cleaner cord.

When I vacuum the rug, it would be difficult for me consciously to make a knot in the cord, assuming that it was connected to both the wall and the cleaner. I think I would have to pick up my large Eureka upright and put it through an even larger, preformed loop in the cord. But lately I have watched the cord as I vacuum. It goes back and forth, twists this way and that, is constantly being turned—creating tension and a tendency to twine around itself. Then—and this was somehow a surprise to me in its obviousness—I *unplug the cord* in order to move from room to room. For long moments, there is a loose end—sometimes jerked and flying through the air if I'm tired or in a hurry—and with the tension on the cord being what it is, a knot sooner or later will occur.

It all makes sense, more or less.

The accidental knotting of my garden hose, however, remains unexplained. I have watched it for some time and can only theorize how a hundred feet of stiff rubber tubing can so easily develop knots. When I discovered those six knots, I thought back and realized that the hose hadn't been moved for over a year, during which time it had, I assumed, been lying in a state of un-snarled rest. The tension from the act of looping those coils the year before, and the tautness resulting from my race to the birdbath, could certainly explain some snarling, but six knots? The unlikelihood of it has caused me to look in other directions.

I live in the country, and quite a few animals come around that hose at night, drinking from a crock I leave there which is filled by a very slow leak at the point where the hose connects to the faucet. Dogs and cats and raccoons and opossums and who knows what else probably touch the hose from time to time, and just a nudge could activate the tension already in the rubber. Also, the weather could have any variety of effects. High winds and driving rains and accumulations of snow could move the hose from its natural inert state. The change in temperature could cause expansion and contraction—in other words, movement—to occur.

The grass and weeds growing under the hose, the erosion of dirt caused by

the leaky faucet, the aging process of the rubber . . . all of these things could combine to make a knot or two while I lie in bed asleep.

But six? It's hard to believe. Possibly other forces, difficult to understand but in keeping with the laws of the universe, have contributed—such as the changing gravitational pull of the moon, or maybe a preceding configuration of the larger planets. But the laws themselves are snarled. We are told both that the universe is expanding and that the natural tendency of all matter is to converge, to pull in upon itself. I have read—and this is disputed—that our solar system originally formed from condensing hydrogen plasma which pulled in on itself and hardened into chunks that became planets and moons that are now locked into orbits about our sun, which is constantly trying to tug them into its fiery gases.

I've always assumed, as Newton did, that these matters had to do with gravity, but cosmologists say they have to do with something called "degree of curvature," and that the quintessence of cur-

vature—don't ask me how—results in the mysterious black holes. Some say that the universe is in the shape of a saddle, except that it has a fourth dimension which perhaps keeps us from being able to see its tendency toward clumping. Other theorists see the universe as having the shape of a figure eight—which we all know is just a yank away from a tangle or a snarl. Whether the universe is going to tie itself into a knot is still in dispute. The argument has to do with the need for a free end, which the universe supposedly doesn't have, but I personally think it might have a tightly bent loop somewhere, which could amount to the same thing.

Some or perhaps all of the forces in the universe may have contributed to the six knots that defeated me the night I ran to put out the fire in the birdbath. I just don't know. The problem is baffling. Despite all my research—or perhaps because of it—the number of knots in that length of rubber hose makes me want to consider the possibility that they occurred not by accident at all but by design.

THE CHAUD STOVE LEAGUE

by Sam Toperoff

In the gorgeous, almost isolated valley in the French Alps where I've been going on vacation for the past few years, only two sporting activities really matter. Before the snow melts in late March, everyone skis, everyone, from the postman to *monseigneur le curé*. During the summer the kids play soccer—the French call it "*foot*"—and the rest of the people watch and cheer.

So I was more than a little surprised when Pierre Desté, the gym teacher in the regional school, approached me at the café late one Saturday afternoon and asked me if I'd try to teach his students how to play baseball. There was, he explained with the aid of some exquisite pantomime, a need for a hand-eye coordinated sport here.

It was true. While tens of thousands of American boys and girls have begun to kick soccer balls around fields and playgrounds in the United States, European kids still don't do very much with their fingers, hands, and arms. So my immediate instinct was to reply, Sure, why not teach baseball? Cultural good will ambassador for the friendly ole *Etats-Unis*, or some such nonsense.

Second thought, however, gave me a better perspective on the task and a shiver of cowardice: my French was so shaky that I sometimes told people, "I'll see you yesterday." (Only their stunned expressions made me realize my mistakes.) But Pierre persisted, and here's what we worked out: the following evening I'd explain baseball to him, and Monday morning I'd help him organize a demonstration game with some of his students. We toasted our international exchange with some Rothschild Napoleon. Pierre picked up the tab.

In bed that night I couldn't sleep. It struck me all at once that I'd committed myself to a very difficult task; baseball probably wouldn't travel very well. The uniquely American cultural overtones and the ritual elements of the game seemed impossible to communicate. All its complexities, its fantastic terminology—"foul" and "wild pitch" and "steal"—suddenly seemed utterly untranslatable. I had no idea how I would begin.

Fortunately, I did have some helpful props: a whiffle ball and a yellow plastic bat, which my seven-year-old



daughter and I sometimes practiced with. At least I could demonstrate the batting stance. I hopped out of bed and stood in front of the mirror with the bat cocked perfectly behind my left ear. Stan Musial. In the dim light I didn't even appear middle-aged.

When I finally got to sleep, I dreamt fitfully. During the technicolor portion of my dream, an amiable movie actor—Bing Crosby, I think—was explaining baseball to a Frenchman, who, like all movie Frenchmen, really spoke and understood English when the chips were down. I knew I wasn't going to be that lucky.

I brought my plastic bat, whiffle ball, and French-English dictionary *chez* Pierre on Sunday evening. We began by sipping some Dubonnet *rouge*. Then he took out some paper, drew in the foul lines of a baseball field, and smiled at his achievement. "That is as much as I know," his smile said. I labeled the *premier*, *deuxième*, and *troisième* bases, but with "home plate" the trouble began. *Plat de maison* was the closest the dictionary brought me. "*Le batteur*

stands at *la maison*," I said slowly half a dozen times. Pierre scowled in non-comprehension.

It took another twenty minutes to convince him of the irrefutable fact that the pitcher and the batter are on opposite teams. Then he simply refused to believe that the batter's teammates just sat around and watched him try to hit the ball. The problem of dimensions killed the first hour. A meter is 39.37 inches; it took a page and a half of complex calculations to set the bases and the pitcher's mound in meters. Naturally, Pierre wanted them exact.

He could not fathom the idea of balls and strikes. How could the ball you hurled be the same word as a pitch that was off target? "Strike" was understandable finally only through a tennis analogy, a serve that couldn't be returned. Ah, that Pierre knew. "*Aaaas*" (ace), he said proudly. So we had *le lanceur* trying to throw an "*aaaas*" over the *plat de maison* and *le batteur* trying to *frapper* it a country *kilomètre*. We celebrated our noble misunderstandings with a bottle of his best Beaujolais.

The day baseball came to the French Alps brought perfect weather: just a breath of bracing breeze from off the snow-capped mountain and a beautiful sky, cloudless and infinitely azure. The site was the school soccer field, a grazing meadow, actually, and dotted with not yet dried cow chips. Home plate was the corner kick triangle of the soccer field. *Le lanceur's* mound and the bases were slalom flags speared into the grass at variable distances. It took

about ten minutes to place the bewildered defensive team in the field. Shortstop was harder to explain than an irregular verb.

Unfortunately, in warming up, Pierre, *le lanceur*, couldn't reach home plate with the too light whiffle ball, but he had foresight enough to bring along an orange tennis ball—better to throw "*aaaases*" with, *monsieur*. So he wound up stiffly and made the first pitch ever in the French Alps, a floater right over *le plat*. As honorary first batter, I laid into it with my yellow plastic bat. A tremendous "thwop" as the bat shattered and the ball rose high, high over the infield. I watched the orange dot hang in the sky as I took off for first base. They'd never be able to catch it. It came down on the second baseman—literally—who bounced it off his forehead, soccer style, right back up in the air. Then the converging shortstop and first baseman did the same, a bit lower each time, until Pierre finally caught the ball easily. Thus was the first and last out recorded.

But we had no bat. Opening day of the Alps' baseball season had to be canceled after only one pitch.

As we wandered back to the gym, the kids didn't seem at all disappointed. They kicked stones back and forth to one another as we walked. Pierre suggested that I bring better equipment next season. He would use the winter months to work with the kids on fundamentals. Finally we agreed to discuss arrangements further that night at my place; there was a Côte du Rhône I'd been saving.

WOMEN WITHOUT MEN

by Benjamin DeMott

The subject of Lillian Faderman's *SURPASSING THE LOVE OF MEN* (Morrow, \$18.95/\$10.95), "romantic friendship and love between women from the Renaissance to the present," is clearly too large for a single volume. I can imagine a reader of good will and sensitivity flinching at the book's hard words—"lesbian" and "lesbianism"—despite feminism's determined effort to redefine them positively. And toward the end of the treatise the author begins slouching toward the suspicion that her real business throughout has been to report yet another triumph of enlightened modern logic over olden

superstition. But while these failings are far from trivial, they're not disabling: this book as a whole is instructive and humane, and often extremely affecting as well.

Its argument, trimmed a little for comprehensibility, runs as follows: until some point in the not very distant past, deep, personal, intensely rewarding attachment between one woman and another was understood by both sexes to be socially desirable and benign. Things changed, though—abruptly and absurdly—whereupon close connection between women was poisoned by a single, sick question: Are the par-

ties involved touching each other sexually? Is the expression of affection "genital"? Are these people *lesbians*? A key function of contemporary feminism is to create a climate that re-establishes the right of women to a caring solidarity with each other, free of prurient obsession with the sexual dimension, if any, of their friendship. And achieving that goal probably requires, for some women, the rejection of traditional relationships with men.

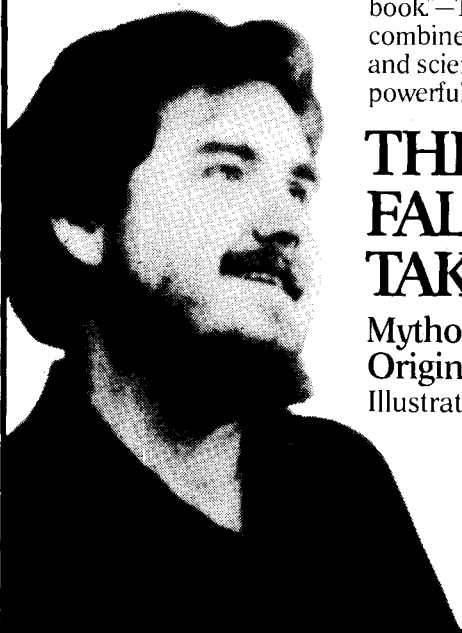
In a preface Dr. Faderman, professor of English at California State University in Fresno, explains that she was drawn to her theme in the course of studying the love poems and letters Emily Dickinson addressed to Sue Gilbert, who was to become her sister-in-law. "Passionate and sexual," unmarked by any sign that the poet "felt the need to be covert about her emotions," these documents presented a vexing problem:

If I had really uncovered a lesbian relationship, why could I not find any evidence of guilt and anxiety, the need to keep secrets from family and friends, that I thought were inevitably associated with homosexuality before the days of gay liberation? . . . Why did Emily, who viewed the event with painful ambivalence, have a nervous breakdown after Sue's marriage to Austin Dickinson?

The author's implicit and naive assumption at the time was that twentieth-century perspectives are always pertinent to nineteenth-century behavior—but, as her tone indicates, she quickly dropped that assumption as she pursued research in English, American, and European literature centered on love relationships between women. (There's no evidence, I have to note in passing, that Professor Faderman ever arrived at an adequate understanding of the configuration of feelings represented in the Gilbert-Dickinson friendship.) Her investigation revealed discontinuities and erratic veerings in the development of an institution first described as "romantic friendship," later as "the love of kindred spirits" or "sentimental friends," still later as "lesbian-feminism." And it was as a chronicle of these discontinuities that she conceived her book—an essay in the history of sensibility that would describe the realities of the relevant changes as experienced by people caught up in them.

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ture is divided into three periods—the sixteenth through the eighteenth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth centuries—and sets under examination two kinds of woman-to-woman relationships: connections understood by contemporaries to be primarily sexual in nature, and connections understood by contemporaries to be either nonsexual or, at any rate, only incidentally sexual in nature. In the earliest period, sexual contact between women seems to have been viewed with more humor than horror. French libertine poets took it as “merely a prelude to heterosexual love-making”; respectable eighteenth-century society sealed it off as a mode of transvestite zaniness inevitable among the unreal inhabitants of the world of the theater or among female prostitutes. But by the mid-nineteenth century, owing partly to Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal*, the joke was over: lesbian love-making was firmly connected with moral degeneracy, and, a half-dozen decades later, owing to Havelock Ellis and Freud, it was seen as proof of mental disorder.

Attitudes toward love relationships considered to be nonsexual proved less easy to categorize, because more is known about how women themselves conceived them. In the seventeenth century, the friendship of the poet Katherine Philips, the “Matchless Orinda,” and Anne Owen (the pair “delighted not in physicality but in the union of souls and in philosophizing and poetizing”) was perceived as ennobling. (Among men, that notion of romantic friendship persisted almost to the eve of the present century.) But soon, among women, other perceptions came to prevail. Romantic friendship was a sanctuary from offensive importunity—male sexual appetite. Sometimes it was an arrangement through which a woman writer, artist, scholar, or other professional—Louisa Alcott, for one—evaded the loneliness imposed by ambition without incurring career-crippling burdens. Recently such friendship, often having a sexual component but seldom exclusively sexual in character, has won the esteem of lesbian-feminists as the best alternative to the falsehood and exploitation of male-dominated societies.

At any given historical moment attitudes toward love relationships between two women were, of course, more complicated than schematic overviews can convey. Professor Faderman opens her discussion of nineteenth-cen-

tury romantic friendship with a chapter on a suit for libel filed in 1811 by two mistresses of a Scottish girls’ boarding school who lost their students when one student’s grandmother publicly charged them with “improper and criminal conduct” with each other. And the record of the proceedings—the final decision awarded a judgment to the mistresses—offers insight into patterns of assumption at that time. It reveals, not surprisingly, that the concept of woman-to-woman friendship as elevating flowed from the conviction



that “women above the lower class were [not] sexual creatures, that they would [not] willingly indulge in sexual activity for the gratification of their own appetites,” and that for persons of their class, sexual congress was “for the sole purpose of procreation.” In finding for the complainants, the House of Lords declared

the behavior of these two women free from suspicion, and affirmed their right—even their *obligation*—to intimacy. A woman who is not capable of the tenderest feelings and deepest intimacy toward her friend is lacking [so held the court] in an essential human component.

The psychological interest of the author’s story to this point, while considerable, doesn’t begin to match that of the period when the structure of assumptions underlying the concepts of “spirituality” and “ennoblement” broke down, and women friends were put under pressure to explain themselves. Between 1890 and 1910, years in which the tradition of romantic friendship among the genteel and educated became suspect because of the findings of the new sexology, those who had previously been protected were suddenly required to prove their decency. In showing forth the human costs of that enterprise then and in the two decades immediately thereafter, Professor Faderman focuses on both the obscure and the famous (Djuna Barnes and Edna Millay among the latter). Her most touching story is that of Jeannette Marks and Mary Woolley, a student and a professor of biblical history, who met at Wellesley College in 1895.

Their relationship “lasted through Mary’s presidency at Mt. Holyoke . . . and to her death in 1947,” but as early as 1908 Jeannette Marks was writing in a vein testifying to “how painful the new view of love between women [i.e., as an ugly disease] must have been to romantic friends, and what self-loathing women must have developed as they tried, whether only publicly or in fact, to alienate themselves from their strongest emotions.” Time and again, Jeannette Marks sought a language in which to serve oblique notice that she, too, shared the world’s repugnance, and to establish that her friendship was untainted. She produced essays on “Unwise College Friendships,” warned students against “temptations,” laid plans for a book on homosexuality in literature emphasizing that “insanity and suicide [were] associated with same-sex love”—everywhere committed herself to an encoded moral battle that, in Professor Faderman’s re-creation, seems at once pitiable, moving, and heroic.

Surpassing the Love of Men verges at intervals on becoming a miscellany of emblematic episodes such as the Marks-Woolley tale, some previously examined at book length elsewhere, many too briefly discussed here to inspire more than a gossip response. (An example of overcompression is the treatment accorded the passionate romantic attachment between Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok.) And further problems emerge. Professor Faderman has a poor ear for the har-

mony of plain prose, a weakness for jargon—"self-actualization," etc.—and too little patience with the tasks of coiling her sentences neatly and paring excess. And, as I say, I found myself troubled by her increasing confidence, as she advances into the politics of contemporary lesbian-feminism, that a period of true awakening is at last at hand.

This objection can be overstated, to be sure. Consciousness that enlightenment has both defects and virtues, entails both losses and gains, surfaces often in the book:

Our century has a passion for categorizing love, as previous centuries did not, which stems from the supposedly liberalized twentieth-century view of sex that, ironically, has created its own rigidity. The sex drive has been identified, perhaps for the first time in history, as being the foremost instinct—in women as well as men—inescapable and all but uncontrollable, and invariably permanently intertwined with real love. As a result, romantic friendships of other eras, which are assumed to have been asexual since women were not given the freedom of their sex drive, are manifestations of sentimentality and the superficial manners of the age. Throughout most of the twentieth century, on the other hand, the enriching romantic friendship that was common in earlier eras is thought to be impossible, since love necessarily means sex and sex between women means lesbian and lesbian means sick.

This strikes me as a sensible, if windy, accounting, founded on a flexible imagining of historical process. But the author's analysis of the "rise of lesbian-feminism" is less flexible; its foundation is extravagant faith in the deity Reason, worshipped by those women who have decided "not to relate to men" sexually and emotionally. And, rather more important, it's marked by a thoroughly ahistorical blindness to recent attitudinal changes in men that are at least as sweeping as those deemed pivotal in this book's discussion of events at the turn of the century. Quoting a young English activist who declares, "It's almost impossible to have any kind of whole relationship with a man," and who sees wholeness as unattainable for any "strong woman" not a lesbian. Dr. Faderman pronounces the logic of the position "compelling." And her final sentences reiterate that the choice made by lesbian-feminists continues to be "the only logical one possible for a

person who desires to be her own adult person."

The absolutism of this, the odd celebration of logic, the hint that it's progress alone that has brought us out here—and, once again, the unresponsiveness to broad new currents of feeling alive within men—strike me as worse than silly. (I hear echoes from yesteryear of infallible males explaining to each other, for the ages, the nature of women.) Having heightened one's awareness of male willfulness, reductiveness, and abstraction, having demonstrated how, in the succession of epochs, one mode of oversimplification or fantasy has replaced another in judgments of a central human relationship, the author, enclosed in an ahistorical vacuum, concludes by greeting as wisdom a new, fiercer, utterly unforgiving abstraction.

I resist.

But, to repeat, *Surpassing the Love of Men* remains, despite these failings, a work of genuine interest and value. Its pages are filled with vivid portraits of heroes and heroines struggling to lead their contemporaries out of delusion on sex and gender matters, and with astonishingly fresh disclosures about details of sexist feeling from age to age. We're shown the links between early versions of "revolting spinsters," "butches/femmes," and the like, and the rhetoric adopted by *Time* and others when abusing Kate Millett for bisexuality. There's a shrewdly placed review of Alfred Adler's attempt to convince his contemporaries that "lesbianism has nothing to do with the traumas that Freud described, and that it is not primarily a sexual phenomenon [but] for some women a means of protest over being accorded an inferior position in society." Dr. Faderman's readings of several works of imaginative literature—most notably Henry James's *The Bostonians*—are tuned closer to the spirit of the originals than the readings currently in vogue in most graduate schools. If she's overentranced with logic and the myths of modern enlightenment, she has a clear sense of ideal relations between men and women—knows, that is, that the only *promesse du bonheur* that's finally worthy is a world without dominance, prurience, or pointless repression.

And while she oversimplifies the present, she does care about the sufferings of the past. Doubtless a strong case for right relationships between the sexes can be rooted elsewhere than in pity for

the pain endured by vanished generations. But in *Surpassing the Love of Men* pity becomes a powerful summons to conscience: yesterday's anguish is felt as today's mandate for change, and the authority of the writer's voice strengthens as her sense of the poignance of forgotten lives deepens.

Felicitas Taylor, heroine of **THE COMPANY OF WOMEN** (Random House, \$12.95), a second novel by Mary Gordon, whose first book, *Final Payments*, was widely praised, marches with modern enlightenment throughout much of her young life, and is planning a monograph to be called *Friendship in Jane Austen*. Reared as a Catholic (her guardians include not only her widowed mother but her mother's three dearest friends and the priest who is their close counselor), she enjoys teasing the provincialism of the Church. (She's hilariously irreverent, for instance, about church vestibule pamphlets addressed to youth—"So You Think It's All Right To Go Steady?" "TV for Teens," "St. Peggy of the Tennis Court," and so on.) Her heroine is Elizabeth Bennet, whom she admires for being "full of the right answers, never looking foolish." And at Columbia, where Felicitas is a student during the countercultural revels, she rejects Father Cyprian's advice to stick to Greek and concentrates instead on Karl Marx.

Keen, enthusiastic, self-centered, condescending to her elders (her mother's friends and the priest ceaselessly cosset her), Felicitas Taylor has to be brought down, and at length she is. A not entirely believable, self-hating professor of Marx cynically deflowers her, and Felicitas finds herself pregnant.

It's the kind of experience that often leads one's "own adult person" to say an everlasting Nay, but, happily, matters come out differently in *The Company of Women*. At the moment of narrative crisis, when Felicitas returns home with the bad news of her pregnancy and her gullibility, she instantly receives from her elders the gift of loving pardon. We don't watch the onset of a seed time of embitterment; neither do we watch Felicitas trading off sophisticated skepticism or comprehension of dominance as the price of being loved and pitied in her misfortune. We see, instead, that in welcoming her home with whole heart, Felicitas's guardians have not observed strict logic. (Strict logic dictates that when those condescended to as inferior see a chance to

humiliate their oppressors, they do so unhesitatingly.) And the balance of the narrative proves, as it carries closer to the present the story of the heroine's relationships with other men and women, that Felicitas has learned an enriching lesson her elders' swift generosity is meant to teach: forbearance is among the world's great things.

No single character in *The Company of Women* seems to me as energetically drawn as the half-dozen major parties in *Final Payments*. (The four adult women are nearly interchangeable: each time the narration turned to one of them, I found myself obliged to leaf backward to check her identity.) And the atmosphere lacks tautness and edge. But there's a sweet and old-fashioned tolerance at the book's core that's highly likable. Miss Gordon chooses for her epigraph Auden's beautiful poem "The Common Life," the tricky closing lines of which claim:

though truth and love
can never really differ, when they
seem to,
the subaltern should be truth.

The charm of *The Company of Women* lies in the warmth of its acceptance of the simple dailiness of forgiveness, and in the directness of its reminder—we can't have too many such reminders, it seems—that, even now, truth and logic luckily often don't compel.

SHORT REVIEWS

NUNS AND SOLDIERS

by Iris Murdoch

Viking, \$14.95

Iris Murdoch is the Houdini of modern novelists. Using props as ancient as the stars and plots as tangled as a botched Indian rope trick, she keeps our attention riveted on the larger questions of human behavior: whether it is possible to act wisely, to love honestly, to live purely. Now, in her twentieth novel, she has perfected her technique and pulled off the big one: a book that unwinds with all the sinuous inevitability of a contortionist to rise into the higher spheres of myth.

The central knot of the story is the emotional life of Gertrude, a woman left desolate by the premature death of her beloved husband, Guy. Guy's family

and friends—a court of retainers, really—do their best to console her, as does her best friend, Anne, newly returned from the convent. But Gertrude needs more and, never having been thwarted in her life, gets it, horrifying her friends and throwing their lives into fresh turmoil.

Naturally, this being a Murdoch novel, nothing is so simple as it might appear to be. While *Nuns and Soldiers* works wonderfully as an archetypal tale of love triumphant, it presents dozens of other possibilities. There is a great deal of questioning about the significance of religion; in fact, Jesus Christ makes a brief but dramatic appearance in Anne's kitchen. More general matters of morality are introduced; it is no coincidence that Gertrude's lover drinks in a pub called the Prince of Denmark, or that her husband's last ravings are drawn from *The Merchant of Venice*. Landscape has numinous powers beyond its aesthetic ones; so do the words of other people, however deeply rooted in deception. This is an exceptionally full book, packed with ideas, symbols, references, questionings, and with characters who, more than usually in Murdoch's novels, seem caught in the real web of life. *Nuns and Soldiers* is a book that you look forward to rereading when you are only halfway through. It is a delight.

THE KILLING OF KAREN SILKWOOD

by Richard Rashke

Houghton Mifflin, \$12.95

In mid-November 1974, a reporter from the New York *Times* and a Washington union official waited anxiously in a Holiday Inn near Oklahoma City for a secretly arranged meeting with an angry worker from the nearby Kerr-McGee plutonium plant. The worker, twenty-eight-year-old Karen Silkwood, said she could prove that her employers were making defective plutonium fuel rods, and were endangering, in other ways, the health of Kerr-McGee plant employees. The two men waited in vain. During the early morning, not many miles away, Silkwood had apparently veered off the inside lane of Highway 74 and had smashed head-on into the entrance of a concrete culvert. She was dead, and her lungs and bones contained plutonium in staggering doses. Almost five years later, an Oklahoma jury decided that the Kerr-McGee Nuclear Corporation had been negligent in its operation of the Crescent, Oklaho-

ma, plant, had allowed plutonium to escape from the facility, and had, in effect, caused the contamination of Karen Silkwood. In the view of the jurors, that was worth \$505,000 in "actual damages" and \$10 million in "exemplary damages."

Richard Rashke, a Washington-based free-lance journalist, has examined the voluminous evidence related to the Kerr-McGee/Karen Silkwood trial and has constructed a narrative suggesting that more than plant negligence is involved in the Silkwood story. Among the reasonable inferences from the data he has assembled: Silkwood may well have been systematically poisoned, and her car was almost certainly rammed from the rear before smashing into the culvert on Highway 74; the documents she said she would show to the waiting *Times* reporter and union official were probably kept hidden in Kerr-McGee letterhead envelopes in a neighbor's barn (an investigator hired by the Silkwood family found the envelopes, but not their contents); the Oklahoma Highway Patrol report of the accident ignored some troublesome details, misinterpreted others, and reached unwarranted conclusions as to Silkwood's emotional and physical state; the Atomic Energy Commission, the FBI, and possibly other federal intelligence organizations may have been involved in a complicated conspiracy to keep the truth about the accident, and working conditions at the Kerr-McGee plant, from the public; the truth about the Silkwood case may never be known.

Rashke's chronicle is chilling, and he has tried, not always successfully, to leaven it with stretches of pure narrative and dialogue. The case has too many loose ends for a single reporter to resolve in a short book, but one implication is clear: Karen Silkwood was murdered, and a great many people—some of them attached to the nuclear industry and others charged with the maintenance of law and order—know more about that murder than they are willing to tell.

THE STORIES OF ELIZABETH SPENCER

by Elizabeth Spencer

Doubleday, \$14.95

The thirty-three stories in this notable collection, representing an equal number of years of the author's interest in "how you take up residence in the world," have a curiously literary quality. Assured, sympathetic, thoughtful,

and utterly merciless in their revelation of individual foibles, they often seem highly observed, as though the narrator were a particularly intelligent and rather witty fly on the wall. Fortunately, this fly has found any number of different rooms to investigate, discovering in each a distinctive yet oddly familiar ambience.

Spencer is generally considered a southern writer, and roughly half of these tales are set in her native Mississippi, in Arkansas, in Louisiana, where family is all-important and where people's accommodations to each other, while sometimes surprising, are tinged with tradition. Others, such as the novella-length "Knights and Dragons" and the similarly troubling "I, Maureen," take place in the larger and less stable world of major cities, where characters' efforts to come to some agreement with life are strained and solitary. Reminiscent of *Light in the Piazza* and others of Spencer's novels, these are allusive and deliberately incomplete, whereas the shorter stories, such as the delightful group about smart-alecky Marilee Summerall and her abundantly eccentric family, are small worlds in themselves.

"Life is important right down to the last crevice and corner," says one character, and it is in depicting habitation—both inner and outer—that Spencer excels. Firmly built on a foundation of literary tradition, her art reaches beyond the familiar toward new experience and the new knowledge it brings.

A DIFFERENCE IN THE FAMILY
Life With a Disabled Child
 by Helen Featherstone
 Basic Books, \$13.95

Helen Featherstone is an education specialist who teaches at Harvard and Wellesley. Her husband is also a teacher and writer. But nothing they had known or experienced prepared them adequately for the afflictions of their second child, Jody, born in 1972. At birth, the infant was exposed to an infection called toxoplasmosis. Over the next several months, his parents "learned that Jody was blind, hydrocephalic, and retarded, that he suffered from cerebral palsy and from seizures." "Each week," Helen Featherstone recalls, "brought new calamities, until we were almost numb with pain."

In the months and years that followed, the Featherstones prowled through the literature that described

other parents' experiences with disabled children, both harrowing first-person testimonies and the more impersonal academic studies directed toward teachers or other service professionals.

A Difference in the Family attempts to combine both approaches, and is thus a "personal" book only parenthetically. On the other hand, its synthesis of the literature is informed, throughout, by the Featherstones' struggle to see clearly the nature of their love and commitment to their gravely disabled son.

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THE RAT ON FIRE by George V. Higgins. Knopf, \$10.95. After several pages of profane eloquence, to which his men listen with amused resignation, Detective Roscommon gets to the point. The attorney general's unprintable young assistant has informed his boss, "There're people that're burning buildings down in Boston. . . . And furthermore . . . they are doing it for money."

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"'Heavens to Betsy,' Carbone said."

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IMAGES OF AGE by Michael Jacques. Abt Books, \$30.00. Mr. Jacques's sharp, unsentimental portrayals of elderly nursing-home residents may arouse pity or terror or both. Mr. Abt's introduction to the book is sensible in deploring the

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waste of energy and ability retained by the elderly, but irrelevant to the drawings, which show people long past the exercise of either quality. Some of them, indeed, have been mentally or physically disabled all their lives. The book is curiously disjointed.

THE WHOLE TRUTH: The Watergate Conspiracy by Sam J. Ervin, Jr. Random House, \$16.95. Exasperated by what he considers the deviousness of Richard Nixon's memoirs, Senator Ervin, who served as chairman of the special committee investigating Watergate, presents his own history of that dismal scandal. The story is complicated but worth the attention it demands, for it represents the slow, determined victory of constitutional law over personal interest, even when that interest inhabited the White House. The senator, whose grasp of the entire affair extends well beyond the proceedings of his own committee, unravels the shenanigans with an attractive mixture of legal precision, patriotic passion, and colloquial humor. Index.

THE WELL by Jack Cady. Arbor House, \$11.95. Realism is not to be expected in

a supernatural thriller, but other merits are possible. Even on the charitable assumption that what the author intended here was a metaphor for the persistence of inherited neuroses, this yarn about an ancestral mansion infested by apparitions, booby traps, and other such nuisances has no merit at all.

LUCY: The Beginnings of Humankind by Donald C. Johanson and Maitland A. Edey. Simon and Schuster, \$16.95. Donald Johanson is the paleoanthropologist who discovered in Ethiopia the partial skeleton of a very small-brained creature that walked like a man well over 3 million years ago. Since this particular creature was female, she is known as Lucy, and her appearance has caused excitement and controversy among her finder's colleagues and rivals. And rivals they are, for paleoanthropologists are as ferocious as any other breed in defense of individual turf—turf, in their case, being theories on human evolution backed by the age of particular fossils, preferably those discovered in person. The uncommitted reader may wonder if it seriously matters whether our ancestors developed larger

brains because they walked on two feet, or walked on two feet because they had developed larger brains. By sketching his distinguished and often eccentric predecessors, describing finds and search methods, and explaining techniques for dating fossil material, the author persuades one that it does matter. Illustrations, diagrams, maps.

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO EAT by Bernard Rudofsky. Doubleday, \$19.95 and \$10.95 paper. Mr. Rudofsky's ideas for the reform of furniture and plumbing are idiosyncratic, enthusiastically argued, and unsupported by any serious consideration of history, climate, relative convenience, or even the simple rule that cold air sinks. His engagingly kooky text is generously illustrated with pictures of the surprising or clever or ludicrous contraptions that humanity has devised to cope with life's daily necessities. References, index.

THE BLOOD OF AN ENGLISHMAN by James McClure. Harper & Row, \$10.95. This well-plotted, well-written murder mystery is set in South Africa, and is exceptional for the details of racial interaction, sometimes grim, sometimes sourly comic, always shocking, that the author casually slides into his entertainment.

GRANT by William S. McFeely. Norton, \$19.95. Once he has disposed of some amateur psychiatric notions and the incongruous claim that his hero was a quite ordinary man, Mr. McFeely settles down to an intelligent, thorough, pleasantly written biographical narrative, well organized and documented. The book does not alter the traditional view that U. S. Grant was a fine general and a poor President, but it does supply considerable information to account for his disappointing executive performance. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Answers to the February Puzzler, "TV GUIDE"

1	S	T	R	A	P	C	O	P	P	E	R	S
2	T	E	A	L	L	O	H	O	O	D	O	O
3	E	P	C	H	I	M	P	S	S	E	W	N
4	L	E	E	W	A	R	D	E	S	X	S	A
5	L	E	A	R	N	A	P	R	E	T	O	R
6	A	S	R	T	T	D	A	M	S	E	L	S
7	R	E	M	O	V	E	D	C	S	N	S	T
8	C	A	P	E	R	S	D	L	O	T	T	O
9	R	C	I	N	I	P	R	A	I	S	E	R
10	I	O	T	A	A	P	E	R	C	U	L	E
11	S	P	R	I	T	E	S	E	B	R	A	Y
12	P	A	R	L	A	Y	S	T	R	E	E	S

Across answers are given in the order of their appearance in the TV listing.

Across. 1. P-RAISER 2. T-REES (*seer* rev.) 3. CH-IMPS 4. CAPERS (anag.) 5. SPRIT-E (anag. + e) 6. TEAL (anag.) 7. IOTA (hidden) 8. APER-CU(t) 9. LEARN 10. LOT-TO(o) 11. REMOVED (anag.) 12. LEE-WARD 13. SEWN (anag.) 14. PRETOR (anag.) 15. B-RAY 16. ST-RAP 17. COPPERS (double def.) 18. P(A-R)LAYS 19. HOOD-OO 20. DAMSELS (anag.) Down. 1. STEL(L)AR (anag. + l) 2. TEP-EES (rev.) 3. RACE (double def.) 4. PL(I)ANT 5. CO(MRA)DE (*arm* rev.) 6. POSER (double def.) 7. POSSE'S-S 8. ROWS (double def.) 9. SONAR (hidden) 10. EX-TENT 11. ARMPI-T (anag. + t) 12. T(OEN)AIL (*one* anag.) 13. ADDRESS (double def.) 14. STORE(Y)S 15. C(L)ARET (anag. + l) 16. STELAE (anag.) 17. C-RISP (anag. + c) 18. R(I)AT-A (*a tar* rev.) 19. COP-A 20. SURE (anag.)

LIFE & LETTERS CONTRIBUTORS

William Allen is a free-lance writer who teaches creative writing at Ohio State University.

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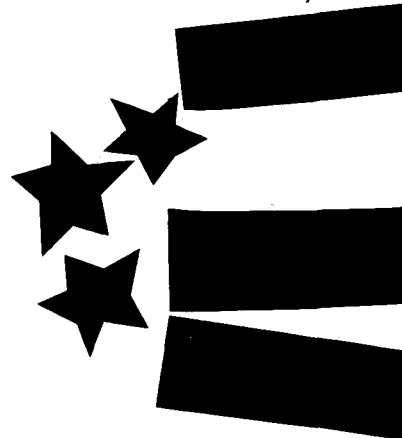
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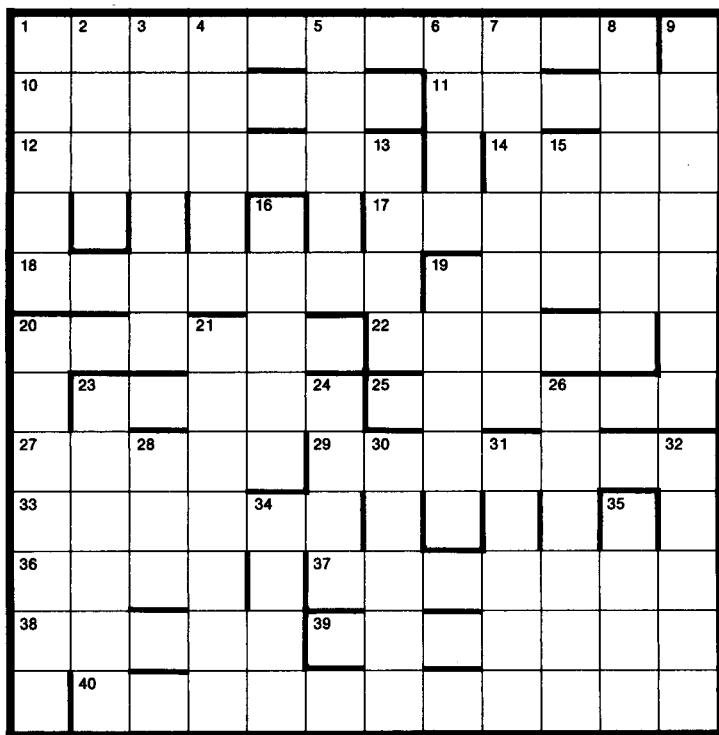
by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

DEBARMENT

Eleven clue answers will not fit into the diagram until subjected to 1A; this should appeal to 40A solvers. Answers include three uncommon words (11A, 20A, 36A), one variant spelling (7D), and one proper noun. Punctuation may be used deceptively.

ACROSS

1. (See directions)
10. Let down, looked gloomy (7)
11. New NASA expedition's beginning with Saturn's loops (5)
12. Spilled lye has fish showing distress (7)
14. America's heartless that way (4)
17. Discontent tuners readjusting (6)
18. After fifty, apprentices may become paid workers (7)
19. Liberated Europe has no love for soup (5)
20. Pinky wiggling about is short and thick (6)
22. U.A.R. arms much improved, hastily (11) (*hyphenated*)
23. Large rocks look brilliant (5)
25. Sweeten the pot containing last of gruel on right half of rack (6)
27. Remarked about piece of pie, "tasty" (5)
29. Splitting documents, brief German on Air Force's first outfit (7) (*two words*)
33. Stand in front of the bolt (6)
36. Heraldic border is whorled on the inside (4)
37. Flipper's arranged a cruise (7)
38. Slashes housing costs (5)
39. Leftover spruce after the fourth of January (7)
40. (See directions)



DOWN

1. Convert Presley to punk (9)
2. Sound made by red deer (4)
3. Bird made out with bird on Noah's boat (10)
4. Female clasping Frenchman's the beauty of Paris (5)
5. Ask private to recruit (8)
6. River has its start in brownish lake (4)
7. Commit nut—stir crazy (7)
8. Sodium has a function in sickness (6)
9. With teary eyes rehashed the end of better days gone by (10)
13. Random hugs show insincere emotionalism (4)
15. Row behind has more precipitant (7)
16. Curious, I pulled up outside (5)
19. Harshly criticize small grammar school, hurting feelings (5)
20. Sticks around for the voice compositions (10)
21. Shocked at Eve, in innocence (7)
23. Fish should have wet part of building (6)
24. Animals in forest wandering or lost (4)
26. Justify part of journey—it takes one crew member (10)
28. Plunderer makes girl plea pathetically (8)
30. Youngster on surreal art: "Not meaningful" (9)
31. Restricted, like drinks for dieters (5)
32. Giving up in favor of ascendant as ruler (9)
34. Heading off the shortest way to Boston from San Francisco (4)
35. Piercing wail (4)

Note: The instructions above are the special instructions for this month's puzzle. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, write to The Atlantic Reprint Department, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 92.

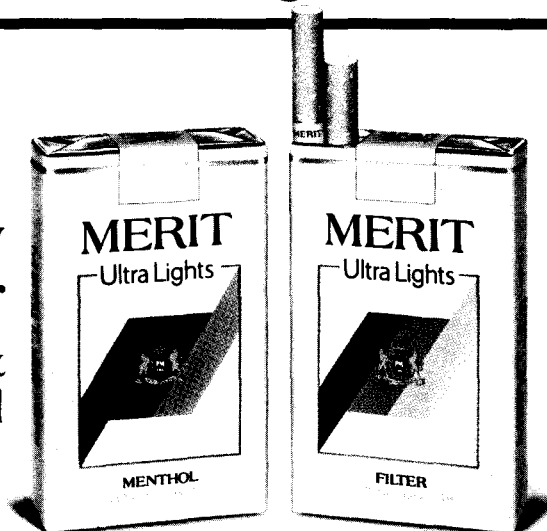
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